

Abstract

Publisher

Finnish Education Evaluation Centre (FINEEC)

Name of publication

Quality of demonstration activities and the competence shown in vocational competence demonstrations

Authors

Veera Hakamäki-Stylman, Paula Kilpeläinen

The Finnish Education Evaluation Centre (FINEEC) implemented a report on the quality of the demonstration activities of VET providers and the learning outcomes demonstrated in vocational competence demonstrations. The evaluation is part of the programme to develop equality and quality in vocational education and training (Oikeus osata). The programme implemented between 2020 and 2022 in cooperation by the Ministry of Education and Culture and the Finnish National Agency for Education. The report as a whole was aimed at providing information on how well the VET legislation that entered into effect on 1 January 2018 is implemented in the education and training providers' demonstration activities.

This report contains the key findings on the education providers' demonstration activities, such as the planning, implementation and assessment practices and the grades awarded for the vocational competence demonstrations. In addition, the key strengths of the demonstration activities and the development needs have been included in the report. The report was implemented without separate gathering of data, and advantage was taken of the results of evaluations and reports carried out by FINEEC and other parties, the national student feedback and working life feedback, and the Koski register, which covered data on 348,725 students and 1,381,476 vocational competence demonstrations from the period between 1 January 2018 and 13 September 2022.

For the majority of the education and training providers, the competence assessment implementation plan is part of their quality management system and guides the practical implementation of vocational competence demonstrations fairly comprehensively. However, at some education and training providers, the implementation plan does not as yet guide the practical demonstration activities (e.g., planning of demonstrations, selection of authentic environments for competence demonstrations and induction of workplace instructors) very comprehensively. The implementation plan is considered to guide the assessment of competence, in particular.

Several education and training providers have versatile and alternative ways of developing the competence of workplace instructors, and most providers offer regular opportunities for the development of guidance and evaluation competence to them. However, ensuring and developing the guidance and assessment competence of workplace instructors continues to be a major challenge for some providers. There is also great variation between providers and qualifications in ensuring and developing the guidance and assessment competence of workplace instructors.

The planning of the competence demonstrations is generally realised fairly successfully. There are differences between education and training providers and qualifications in the planning practices, such as the composition of the group of people planning the demonstrations. Although the majority of the demonstrations are planned together with the teacher, the student and the working life representative, tripartite planning is not always realised. There is still room for development in the implementation of

competence demonstrations at workplaces, and great variation between education providers, fields and qualifications in the proportion of demonstrations that are implemented in authentic situations in working life. During the past four years, no significant changes have taken place in the authentic environments for competence demonstrations of different fields and qualifications. The coronavirus pandemic has also not had any significant effects on the environments or the assessment of demonstrations.

Between 2018 and 2022, approximately one quarter of all competence demonstrations were carried out at the educational institution. Just over one quarter of the demonstrations of vocational upper secondary qualifications and just under one fifth of those of further vocational qualifications were carried out at the educational institution. The demonstrations of specialist vocational qualifications are as a rule completed at workplaces.

The authentic environments for competence demonstrations vary greatly between the fields of VET and in the different qualifications within them. Almost all competence demonstrations in the fields of health and welfare and in the fields of business and administration are organised at workplaces or jointly by workplaces and educational institutions. On the other hand, the majority of demonstrations in the fields of humanities and arts and a large part of demonstrations in the field of information and communication technologies (ICT) are implemented at the educational institutions. However, since 2019, the fields of humanities and arts have seen a slight decline in the number of demonstrations completed at educational institutions. Approximately one third of the demonstrations in the fields of agriculture and forestry, engineering, natural sciences and education have been organised at an educational institution.

The proportion of competence demonstrations implemented at the educational institutions also varies between the education and training providers. In the majority of the providers, the proportion of demonstrations implemented at educational institutions is less than one quarter. In just over one tenth of the providers, the proportion of the demonstrations implemented at the educational institution is more than one half. When examined by type of educational institution, a fairly large proportion (34–38%) of the demonstrations completed at the educational institution is seen especially in music schools, sports institutes and vocational special education institutions. In those education and training providers where demonstrations organised at workplaces are a majority, they were distributed between several fields of VET. When examined by the location of the education and training provider (area of the Regional State Administrative Agency), there are no significant differences in the authentic environments for competence demonstrations.

In the majority of the demonstrations (73%), the teacher and the working life representative have together decided on the grade awarded for the demonstration. However, working life representatives participate only rarely in the assessment of demonstrations implemented at educational institutions, and a total of approximately one quarter of the demonstrations have been assessed without a working life representative. In addition, the statutory requirement of two assessors participating in deciding on the grade for the demonstration is not realised in the assessment of approximately one out of ten demonstrations. However, criterion-referenced assessment and the realisation of students' self-assessment in demonstrations are considered to be the strengths of the demonstration activities.

The assessment practices in competence demonstrations vary considerably between the education and training providers and the fields of VET, which undermines the reliability and commensurability of assessment. In the majority of education and training providers (86%), the proportion of demonstrations assessed jointly by a teacher and a working life representative is more than one half. However, in five per cent of the providers, the proportion of demonstrations assessed jointly by a teacher and a working life representative is less than 10 per cent.

The grades given to vocational upper secondary qualifications were on average very good (average 3.9). Just over one half (55%) of the grades awarded for the demonstrations were good (3-4) and just over one third (35%) were excellent (5). The proportion of satisfactory (1-2) grades was approximately 10 per cent. The clearest differences in grades were observed between the fields of VET. The greatest differences were between the grades awarded in the fields of health and welfare and the fields of engineering. Approximately one half of the grades awarded in the fields of health and welfare were excellent, while excellent grades accounted for one quarter of the grades given in the fields of engineering. The grades awarded for demonstrations completed at the workplace were on average better than the grades awarded for demonstrations implemented at educational institutions. The proportion of excellent grades awarded for demonstrations carried out at workplaces was clearly higher (40%) than that of grades awarded for demonstrations at educational institutions (26%). In demonstrations completed at educational institutions, just under one fifth (18%) of the grades were satisfactory and in demonstrations completed at workplaces, just under one tenth (7%). There were no significant differences in the grades when examined by location and size of the education provider and by student's mother tongue and gender.

Keywords: competence assessment implementation plan, planning of competence demonstrations, implementation and assessment, authentic environment for competence demonstration, demonstrations completed at educational institutions, demonstrations completed at workplaces, competence demonstration, grades awarded for demonstrations, equity