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Diverse learning environments support vocational development

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Well set-up and practical learning environments are a significant part of Finnish vocational education and training. Diverse learning spaces and tools support the students' vocational development and prepare them for the working life.

Workshops

The workshops in the educational institutions are true laboratories of learning. They are equipped with the tools and devices used in the field, so that the students can practice in an authentic environment.

Vehicle technology workshops contain garage jacks, devices to test engines, as well as tools. The students can become familiar with electric installations and practice using the tools of the trade in a safe environment with qualified teachers in the electrical technology workshops.

Some of the machines in the workshops are not even available in all the companies of the field. On the other hand, especially larger companies often own machines a college cannot purchase. It is important to plan the student's individual learning path in a way which combines gaining the required skills both in an educational environment as well as at the workplace.

“Even though practical training is important, theoretical education is also needed.”



Working life oriented learning environments at the educational institutions

Teaching restaurants and kitchens at educational institutions offer the students the possibility to practice their vocational skills in authentic situations. They can work as cooks, servers, or restaurant service producers. The restaurants are open to the public, so anybody can come and enjoy the delicious meals cooked by the students. This creates positive pressure for the students, as well as the responsibility to act professionally and to develop their customer service skills.

The teaching in the restaurant field may also take place at a workplace. Then the students work in a commercial restaurant instead of an educational institution, but still under teacher supervision.

Commissioned works are an important part of learning in many vocational fields. Vocational colleges may also produce goods for sales.

Classroom education and other facilities for theoretical education

Even though practical training is important, theoretical education is also needed. Classrooms offer an environment where the students can focus on learning vocational information and skills. The classrooms contain educational technology, computers, projectors, and audio equipment. The students can take part in lectures, do group work, or take part in teacher-led discussions.

Traditional printed books also play a role in vocational education. The students can check them out from the college libraries.

Digital and virtual learning environments and simulations

Digital learning environments have become increasingly important in vocational education. They offer many benefits, such as flexibility, studying regardless of time and place, as well as interactive learning experiences. Using digital tools benefits all students, as their future workplaces already use such tools.

A form of digital learning environments is virtual reality (VR), where the students can access virtual environments. For example, the care work students can practice various treatments using virtual patients. Simulators allow the students to practice using large machines and vehicles in a safe and environmentally friendly manner.

Entrepreneurship learning environments

Entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial work methods are important success factors in the working life today and in the future. The students can found their own companies during the studies. There they can test their business ideas, learn entrepreneurship and the conventions of being an entrepreneur by working as entrepreneurs either alone or in a group. At the same time, they gain vocational qualification units. Entrepreneurship studies can be integrated into vocational or common units of the qualifications.

Co-operatives

Vocational colleges may also host co-operatives, which the students can join. As members of the co-operative, the students are employed by the co-

operative. Through the co-operative, the students can offer customers services and/or goods in their own study field, while the co-operative takes care of the employer obligations.

Authentic learning environments offer the students the possibilities to develop their working life skills and entrepreneurial attitude, to gain a deeper understanding of what entrepreneurship means, learn through practice, and gain confidence.

