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Vocational education meets the needs of the working life

Hanna Ilola, Licentiate of Art (Education), Director,
School of Pedagogical Innovations and Culture, TAMK

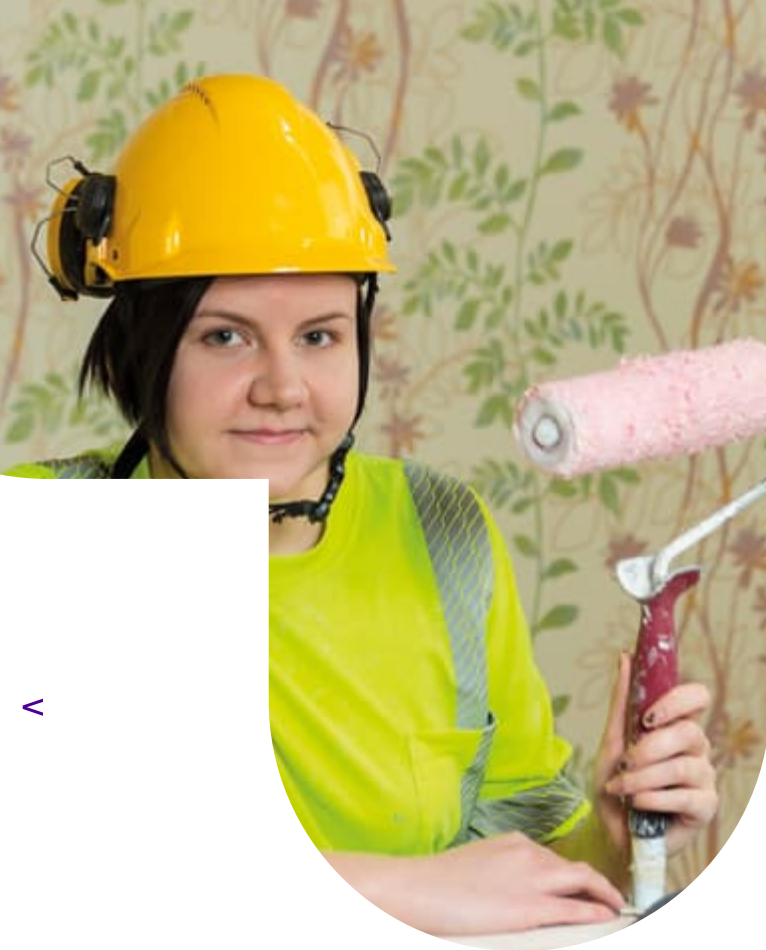
Finnish vocational education is a vast and diverse system. It allows the youth and adults the possibility to gain practical competences and skills for working in different professions. Vocational education is a part of the Finnish education system, and its aim is to meet the demands of the working life and to ensure skilful workforce in different fields. It also aims to ensure the youths' and adults' readiness for continuous learning and living in changing circumstances. Finnish vocational education is of high quality, and it offers a great starting point for working life or for continuing studies in higher education. Strong working life collaboration and the students' active role in the educational process have made vocational education and training an epitome for other countries.

Vocational education consists of many different fields and qualifications, which cover a wide range of professions. The students can choose a field they are interested in, and specialise in the vocation of their choosing.

The roles and contents of vocational education are defined by legislation. The legislation gives, for example, the following responsibilities for vocational education and training:



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1. Developing working life competences: the primary task of vocational education and training is to prepare the students for the working life.

2. Promoting all-round education: the education offers basic competences, such as languages, maths, and knowledge of society. These are vital skills in the working life, civil society, and moving onto further education.

3. Supporting the students' individual growth and skills by personalisation. The students are entitled to guidance and special support in their studies.

4. Promoting sustainable development: the education takes the principles of sustainable development into account and supports ecologically, socially, and economically sustainable activities.

5. Collaboration with the working life: representatives from the working life are involved in the planning and implementation of vocational education and training.

Vocational education has reflected other phenomena in society over the years and over time has played its part in building the well-being society. The development of the educational system has increasingly emphasized collaboration with the working life and considering students' individual needs.

Digitalisation has grown in significance in vocational education. Educational institutes have started to use digital learning environments and materials. This, in its part, has enabled the students to study individually in connection with their own

goals and prerequisites. In addition, the utilization of technology and virtual learning environments has also provided new opportunities for practicing practical skills.

In Finland, a vocational teacher is a respected profession. The teacher must know the working methods of their field, as well as pedagogies. Teachers are offered continuous extension training, so they can update their competences and support their students in the best possible way.

After comprehensive school, the Finnish school system offers two paths: upper secondary school or upper secondary vocational education. The students often move directly onto the working life from vocational education, but higher education studies are also possible. The diversity of the educational system and offering different alternatives to the students enable individual paths to education and the working life. Adults can also apply for vocational education, which has increased its popularity and flexibility for career changing and for people whose life situations have changed.

Vocational education has increased in popularity in the recent years. Thanks to the changes in the educational system, vocational education is an increasingly attractive option for many people who wish to gain working life competences sooner and quickly move onto the working life. Of the youth who finish their comprehensive education, approximately half apply for vocational education.

There are 130 colleges which provide vocational education in Finland. Some of these are small and only offer a few qualifications. Others are very big, may cover the vocational education for an entire municipality, and offer dozens of qualifications. The national budget contains resources for the

education providers and the government makes the decisions on the resources. The Ministry of Education and Culture decides on the qualifications being offered, and how much education can be arranged.

