

Jalolahti, J., Stylman, V., Rökköläinen, M. & Kilpeläinen, P. 2017. Vocational competence in Vocational Qualification in Youth and Leisure Instruction. Helsinki: Finnish Education Evaluation Centre.

The evaluation covers vocational competence in Vocational Qualification in Youth and Leisure Instruction. The evaluation data consists of the vocational skills demonstrations and supplementary material describing the manner in which they are arranged. The results describe the grades given for the vocational skills demonstrations and the activities relating to arranging the skills demonstrations. The evaluation covered all students that had started studying towards a Vocational Qualification in Youth and Leisure Instruction in vocational upper secondary education and training (VET) in autumn 2013 and all units providing such programmes. Evaluation data was collected over the entire duration of the programme, until the end of the 2016 spring term. Information on grades and quantitative data on the arrangement of vocational skills demonstrations were supplemented with self-assessments of VET providers and audit visits. The vocational skills demonstrations plans, evaluation plans and the descriptions of skills demonstrations approved by the institutional bodies responsible for demonstrations were also analysed. The expertise of the teachers in the field was used in the analysis of the data and results as well as during the audit visits.

The evaluation of learning outcomes was based on the vocational skills demonstrations and thus the focus was on vocational competence. The evaluation was based on the vocational skills requirements and assessment criteria outlined for the programme in the Qualification Requirements. Assessment of skills in the demonstrations covers mastering the work process, mastering the working methods, equipment and materials, mastering the knowledge forming the basis of the work and key competences for lifelong learning. Thus, the Qualification Requirements provide the starting point for evaluation.

The evaluation of learning outcomes of vocational education is development-oriented by its nature and the active participation of the VET providers and the interactive character of evaluation are emphasised. The data was collected directly from the vocational skills demonstrations arranged by the VET providers. The development-oriented nature is also reflected in the self-assessment of the VET providers and the feedback reports submitted to VET providers which they can use to compare their own results with national results. The audited VET providers also received a feedback report on the audit.

Evaluation data was collected from all education providers (n = 16). The data covered 396 students and 1,466 vocational skills demonstrations. The evaluation also covered students with special needs. The material covered 169 vocational skills demonstrations given by students with special needs. The material contained vocational skills demonstration plans from 15

education providers and descriptions of 1,618 demonstrations. 16 education providers supplied self-assessment material. Two audit visits were made.

About two thirds (65%) of all students received the final grade “excellent” for the demonstration, 31 per cent received the grade “good” and four per cent the grade “satisfactory”. The most common grade in all competence areas was “excellent” except for mastering the knowledge forming the basis of the work. Key competences for lifelong learning accounted for the largest proportion of “excellent” grades (69%), while mastering the knowledge forming the basis of the work accounted for the lowest proportion (43%). The averages for the objects of evaluation varied between 2.33 and 2.65 on a scale of one to three. The average of the final grade for the skills demonstration was 2.60. There were no grade differences between genders. However, there were slight grade differences between VET providers. Unlike in many other evaluations of vocational upper secondary qualifications, no major problems or challenges were found in key competences for lifelong learning or their evaluation. Moreover, the grades for vocational skills demonstrations did not depend on the assessors and there were no significant differences in grades between the demonstration places.

Students with special needs received fewer “excellent” grades and more “good” and “satisfactory” grades than other students. Nearly all (98%) of the skills demonstrations by special needs students were performed without using individually adjusted objectives. Slightly less than half (46%) of all grades given for the skills demonstrations without individually adjusted objectives were “good”. “Excellent” and “satisfactory” grades accounted for 40 and 13 per cent of all grades, respectively.

The working life relevance is extremely good in the Vocational Qualification in Youth and Leisure Instruction. Roughly nine out of ten (89%) skills demonstrations were performed in working life and for many units and VET providers, nearly all skills demonstrations were given at the workplace. A total of 86 per cent of all demonstrations were performed as part of on-the-job learning. Nearly all students with special needs also performed their demonstrations at workplace. There was no connection between the grades and the skills demonstration places and regional differences were also small. Thus, the working life relevance in the programmes was of reasonably uniform quality. Moreover, according to the self-assessment of the VET providers, on-the-job learning places meeting the qualification requirements are widely available. The availability of the skills demonstration place meeting the requirements was also considered generally good.

There was substantial variation between VET providers in the amount of on-the-job learning and participation of vocational teachers in the working-life periods. There were also differences between the quality of the demonstration and the demonstration plans as well as evaluation plans between VET providers. Furthermore, it was noted that there is room for improvement in collecting and using monitoring and feedback information compiled by the VET providers, vocational teachers’ work-life skills as well as ensuring workplace instructors’ assessment competence. Differences in pedagogic activities and the quality of the skills demonstration process did not have statistically significant impact on the learning outcomes. The evaluation highlighted development needs in VET providers as well as in the education administration.