

Survey on the image of vocational education and training 2020 Key results

Opetus- ja kulttuuriministeriö



OBJECTIVE AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SURVEY

- The survey was carried out by IROResearch Oy from September to December 2020. They were commissioned by the Ministry of Education and Culture and Skills Finland.
- The survey follows on from those carried out in 2007, 2010, 2013, 2016 and 2018.
- The aim was to examine the image of vocational education and training, and the perceptions, opinions and experiences of vocational education and training among various target groups.
- The survey included both qualitative and quantitative approaches.
- The samples sizes of the target groups for the quantitative part were: Pupils in grade 9 of comprehensive school (N = 300) and their parents (N = 100), student counsellors in comprehensive school (N = 100), young people studying in the second year of vocational education and upper secondary school (N = 600), adults studying in vocational education (N = 100) and decision-makers in human resources issues in companies with more than five employees (N = 100).
- The quantitative data was collected by telephone interviews between 7 October and 7 December 2020.
- For the qualitative survey 52 people were interviewed personally. The interviews were conducted between 29 September and 27 November 2020 in the Helsinki, Tampere, Kuopio and Rovaniemi regions.

THE IMAGE OF VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING IS POSITIVE OVERALL

- The image of vocational education and training was positive overall in all of the survey target groups.
- Vocational education and training
 - Provide basic skills and knowledge for different professions and working life
 - Provide formal opportunities for further studies
 - Is practical, versatile, useful, flexible and relaxed
 - Suitable for those who have found their own field / profession, and who prefer studies that include concrete work.
- From the student's point of view, the most important factor for success in their studies is finding a field / profession that interests them.
- The most positive images of vocational education and training were among young people studying in vocational education and training. Almost everyone had been able to study the profession / degree they selected as their first choice. Studying that includes a lot of on-the-job learning is considered to be good preparation for a profession, students' expectations of their studies were met on the whole.

VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING VS. OTHER MAIN OPTIONS

Post-comprehensive school education options	What one gets	Initial prerequisites	Difficulty of studies	Who does it suit	Social desirability
Vocational education and training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Professional competence, concrete skills, knowledge and skills in working in a profession, employment Formal opportunities for further studies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clear view of a profession / field of interest 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> More relaxed and pressure-free than in upper secondary school, fewer exams and books Flexibility and options 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Practical for employees For those who learn by doing, reading is not of interest 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Social status with the education / qualification low A good position can be achieved through the competences available
Upper secondary school	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Excellent preparation for further study International capabilities General education More time to choose a profession Familiar and safe choice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sufficiently high average in subjects 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coping is demanding. Mental well-being and stress are a concern. Exam weeks are heavy, competitive. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> For pupils, for people setting exams Clear goal of higher education 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clearest and strongest institution, pole position: the basis for living standards, values and good social status Baccalaureate's legal status is high
Double degree	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Professional competence Excellent preparation for further study General education 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sufficiently high average in subjects Clear view of a profession / field of interest 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Extremely laborious and demanding reputation Differences in practical possibilities between educational institutions and municipalities, upper secondary school evening classes are demanding 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> For those lean towards learning by doing, good study technology, strong motivation, mastering their time management Idea of continuing to higher education 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Social status of a Baccalaureate Starting high school can be a compromise with home life Concept of 'vocational upper secondary school' in Rovaniemi is strong

APPRECIATION OF VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING IS LOWER THAN THAT OF UPPER SECONDARY SCHOOL AMONG GRADE 9 PUPILS

- 43% of young people in grade 9 have a high appreciation of upper secondary school as an educational option and 48% have a fairly high appreciation of it.
- Only 10% of pupils in grade 9 have a high appreciation of vocational education and training as an educational option and 61% have a fairly high appreciation of it.
- The parents of grade 9 pupils also value upper secondary school more, but the difference between the level of appreciation for vocational education and training is clearly smaller than that of their children (young people in grade 9).
- Employers appreciate vocational education and training, and this will be needed in Finland in the future. In their opinion, there are worrying differences in the competence levels of vocational education and training graduates, and some graduates also have major shortcomings in basic skills. Some employers feel that they have too much responsibility and work to train students / recent graduates to the level that the work actually requires.

VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING WILL ALWAYS BE NEEDED AND THE NEED WILL NOT DIMINISH

- The future of vocational education and training is seen as bright overall by all target groups.
- People with skills in practical work will continue to be needed, and Finland will not be able to cope "just with master's degree holders".
- There is still much to improve in collaboration between students, teachers and employers.
- Basic skills and knowledge should be taught at school and not in the workplace. This would be helped by increasing the amount of contact teaching and more school-oriented studies.
- Taking care of motivation to study for different kinds of students may be challenging, and the need for more individual guidance and support will increase.
- The adequacy of resources for vocational education and training and the quality of education are of some concern in all target groups.

INCREASING CONTACT TEACHING IS THE NUMBER ONE WISH

- The amount of contact teaching and more school-oriented studies should be increased (regular and full study days).
- Additional active, focussed and up-to-date teachers are needed.
- More individual / tailored training, guidance and support are needed.
- The standard of vocational education and training should be increased.
- The options for apprenticeships should be increased and developed.
- Students' motivation must be considered.
- Marketing of vocational education and training should be increased to improve how it is regarded and its desirability.

STUDENTS FEEL THEIR STUDIES ARE IMPORTANT AND THEY WANT TO SUCCEED

- The general motivation to study is good in all target groups, as the studies are considered necessary in order to gain access to the job / profession they want.
- The students also want to succeed well in their studies.
- Pupils in grade 9 of comprehensive school find their current studies less interesting and enjoyable than others.
- The results from young people studying in vocational education and training emphasised the statement "Work is more interesting than studying".
- Adult students found their current studies most interesting and enjoyable.

FINDING AN INTERESTING FIELD IS THE MOST IMPORTANT FACTOR IN SELECTING VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING

- Finding an interesting field plays a very important role in the smooth running of a person's studies and their later success in working life.
- When considering education and training options, an individual's leanings, motivations, way of learning and personality are the most important starting points.
- Young people's choices are influenced by their grade average in comprehensive school, while adults are also influenced by financing opportunities for their studies.
- Upper secondary school has a fairly clear advantage in the interest it generates and its status. It is an easy and obvious choice if the grade average is good enough.
- Vocational education and training can "beat" upper secondary school if the student has a strong view about an interesting field / profession.

DRIVERS AND BARRIERS FOR VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Drivers

- Fast and direct path to a profession, work, independence
- Secure employment
- General skills, E.g. driving licence, skills that support hobbies
- Good / OK, excellent earnings possible as an entrepreneur
- Human capital to be sold as an entrepreneur
- Concrete, "real" professions / jobs
- Can do significant things
- Opportunity to learn new things.
- Change of life using previous education and work experience (adults)
- Path to a dream profession for a student through learning by doing, for example a carer - > a nurse, for someone strong in domestic and craft subjects

Barriers

- Difficulty in choosing, finding a field where you feel at home and committing to it
- For a pupil who has an average of 9 and a clear idea of higher education, a more direct route is upper secondary school
- Poor social status
- Expectations of parents and friends
- Images of vocational work: heavy, physical, low-paid jobs

THE ROLE OF THE STUDENT COUNSELLOR IS SIGNIFICANT IN COMMUNICATIONS ABOUT VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING

- The role of the student counsellor as a guide and a source of information for pupils in grade 9 is extremely important. Knowing pupils personally and guidance based on an individual pupil's wishes and leanings is critical for young people.
- Other sources of information include teachers, friends, siblings, parents and the Internet / social media.
- The majority (80%) of pupils in grade 9 at comprehensive school, and their parents, feel they have received enough information about vocational education and training.
- Young people currently studying in vocational education and training are good and credible "salesmen".
- Participative channels / communication methods work well: Study visits to vocational institutions, study trials, meetings with students in vocational education and training institutions and visits by local companies in schools.

Young people are a challenging target group from a communications perspective. Decision-making is drawn out, and they do not take the initiative in seeking out information, especially not by reading.

WHAT KINDS OF QUESTIONS DO PUPILS IN GRADE 9 WANT ANSWERS TO?

- What types of study paths are available?
- What different professions / fields are available and what do their training courses cover?
- How are applications made and how does the application process work?
- What kinds of opportunities for further studies are available?
- What are the different study places / schools like?
- How demanding are the studies?
- What do you do in practice during lessons?
- What is teaching and studying like in practice?
- What is work like in different professions?

The paths / options for further studies offered by vocational education and training are not as clear as in upper secondary school. The image of vocational education and training is that it is mainly a route to work.



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