Survey on the image of upper secondary education 2022

Summary report

OPETUS-JA

KULTTUURIMINISTERIÖ SkillsFinland









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General information about the survey

The study on the image of upper secondary education was carried out by the Ministry of Education and Culture and Skills Finland.

As a research partner, Innolink was responsible for the practical implementation of the survey.

The study follows on from previous surveys on the image of vocational education and training, carried out since 2007, and most recently in 2020.

In this year's questionnaires and interviews, the share of general upper secondary education has been emphasised. The aim of the survey was to examine the different target groups' mental images, perceptions, opinions and experiences of upper secondary education.

The survey was mainly completed as telephone

interviews. Of the groups of respondents, pupils in grade 9 and young people studying in vocational education and training or in general upper secondary school were contacted also electronically. The effect of the data collection method on the responses was examined both as a whole and in a question-specific manner. At the level of individual questions, the responses reflected some variation between the data collection methods, but as a whole, the data collection method did not seem to have a systematically positive or negative effect on the results.

The survey is based on a total of 1 722 responses from six different target groups. The target groups are specified on the next page.





Respondents

Quantitative part:



9th graders

5

Parents of 9th graders

10

101 responses.

392 responses.

Young people studying in vocational education and training and general upper secondary school, 726 responses, of which:

Students in vocational education and training345 responsesStudents in general upper secondary education381 responses



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Adult students in vocational education and training	302 responses
Guidance counsellors	100 responses
HR professionals	101 responses.

Qualitative part (Espoo, Kotka, Tampere):

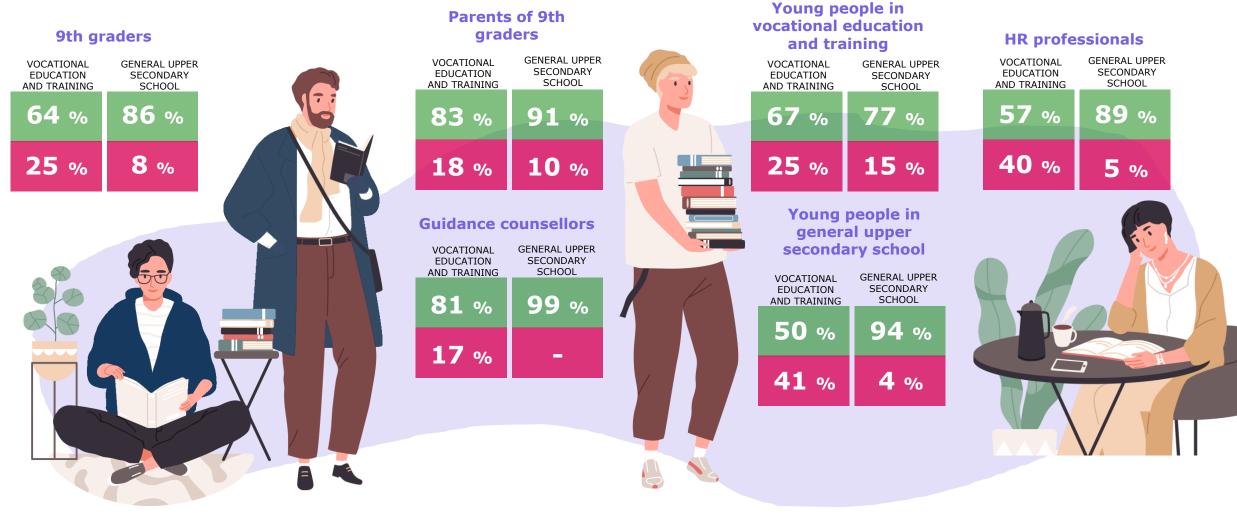
	9th graders' pair interviews	18 respondents.
69	Parents of 9th graders	4 respondents.
	Young people studying in vocational education and pair interviews	training, 6 respondents.
<u>(</u>)	Adult students in vocational education and training pair interviews	, 6 respondents.
	Young people in general upper secondary education pair interviews	٦, 6 respondents.
\mathcal{O}	Guidance counsellors in basic education	6 respondents.
	HR professionals	6 respondents.

Appreciation of upper secondary education

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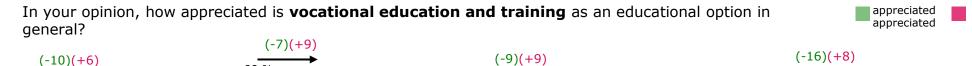


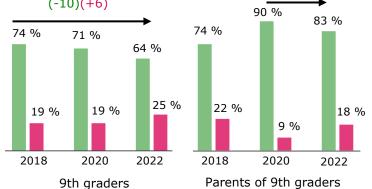
In your opinion, how appreciated are vocational education and training and general upper secondary education as educational options?

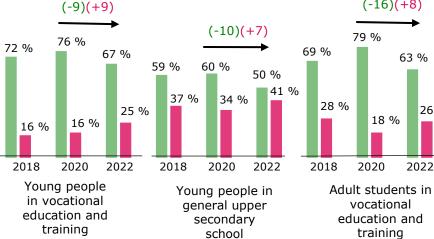


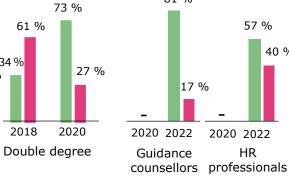
Very or fairly appreciated

Development of the appreciation of upper secondary education









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81 %

not

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63 %

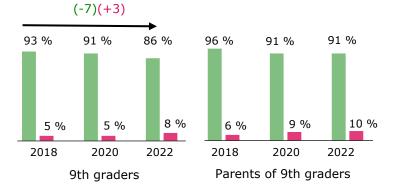
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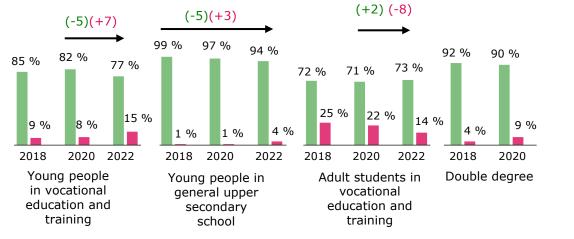
34 %

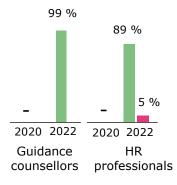
26 %

2022

In your opinion, how appreciated is **general upper secondary education** in general?







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40 %

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Selecting a study place in upper secondary education 1/2

For 9th graders, finding an interesting field clearly has the greatest influence on their choice of a **study place in upper secondary education** (66%

"influences very much", 69% in 2020). This is well in line with the way in which their parents want them to make the choice: 85% say that the child's own opinion should be very influential (highest percentage; 88% in 2020), followed by finding a field of personal interest (61%) (2020: 80% in 2020).

This opinion is also supported by the **guidance counsellors**' view, which indicates that pupils' choices are most strongly guided by **their personal fields of interest** (86%: "*influences very much*"). The potentially noteworthy topic of assessing the pupil's ability or aptitude was not included in the criteria asked of the guidance counsellors. It **can be considered worrying** that nearly one fifth of the respondents in grade 9 (18%) say that they have **not received sufficient guidance to support their decision on education**.

Up to one third of their parents feel the same way (33%).

From the **perspective of the quality** of guidance received, it is significant that **every sixth guidance counsellor** (16%) replies that **they do not have sufficient information** on upper secondary education and the different options in order to do their work.



Selecting a study place in upper secondary education 1/2



Among young people studying in vocational education and training, the main factor guiding their choice was their personal field of interest, 56% (2020: 71%) and 36% of general upper secondary school students (2020: 46%). This was also the case with adult students in vocational education and training (55%) (2020: 80%). Overall, the importance of an interesting field seems to have decreased, even though it is still clearly the strongest criterion guiding the selection process.



Among young people in vocational education and training, the **next two most significant** criteria guiding their choice are the *Desire to get a job, which provides a good salary* and the *Desire to quickly enter the world of work* (29%). For students in general upper secondary school, in turn, these are the *Desire to get a job, which provides a good salary* and the *Location of the educational institution* (32%).

Young people studying in vocational education and training would be **somewhat more prepared** than general upper secondary school students **to consider other places of education**. In addition to general upper secondary education and vocational education and training, the **double degree** is **also** selected as a viable option: 19% of students in vocational education and training, and 36% of students in general upper secondary education mention the double degree.



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Image of vocational education and training 1/8

The interviewees' perceptions of vocational education and training are mainly good and consistent – vocational education and training is strongly seen as a form of education related to practice and aimed at employment.

In the 9th graders' responses, the image of vocational education and training is largely positive. In their perceptions, the education is a quick and direct way to enter the world of work, and its practical nature is highlighted. One third of the respondents are planning to select vocational education and training as their first option after basic education. The appreciation of both vocational education and general upper secondary education has **fallen slightly** among the respondents (the share of "highly / fairly appreciated" responses has decreased by 7% for vocational education and training; 5% for general upper secondary education).

Guidance counsellors play a key **role** in providing information about upper secondary education, 72% say that they have gained information from them. The next most important information sources are parents (57%) and school in general (56%). The emergency conditions are mentioned to have hampered familiarisation with upper secondary education institutions.



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Image of vocational education and training 2/8

Awareness of the double degree and eligibility for further studies have remained at more or less the same level. The most popular sectors of vocational education and training are the **fields of technology**. One fifth of those intending to apply for vocational education and training are not sure about the specific field yet. When asked which profession or degree they plan to study for, the most common replies included the matriculation examination, doctor, practical nurse, teacher, and occupations in the HVAC and electrical sector. When asked about additional options, the share of 'do not know' responses has increased significantly $(17 \% \rightarrow 37 \%)$. One third (35%) say that they will start working after upper secondary education, and about half (47%) say that they will continue studying; there is a **significant difference between those intending to study in vocational education and training, and those in general upper secondary education**.

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Image of vocational education and training 3/8

Parents of 9th graders: Slightly over a quarter of respondents would choose vocational education and training as a suitable education for their child. Nearly half of the parents would choose the **field of technology** as a suitable sector of vocational education and training for their child. When asked whether there could be other professions or qualifications suitable for the child, the share of 'do not know' responses has doubled since the last survey (now 60%).

In the eyes of parents, the **appreciation of vocational education and training has fallen from two years ago** (the share of *not very / not at all appreciated* responses has increased to 18 per cent (2020: 9%).

The parents' open responses suggest that the majority emphasise **selecting the profession while appreciating the child's strengths**, but that ultimately the **child can make their own decision**.



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Image of vocational education and training 4/8

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Approximately one fifth of parents **expect their child to go to work after upper secondary education**,

whereas in the responses of 9th graders themselves, one third were planning to go to work. Almost one third of parents (28%) say that they do not know about their child's plans after upper secondary education.

The qualitative feedback correlates fairly strongly with the feedback received from the 9th graders.

In the mental images, doing something with your own hands, the need for vocational experts, and the growing appreciation of vocational education and training are emphasised. However, a few parents feel that vocational education and training is still slightly more theoretical than it should be, or that things are taught that are not important for the profession in question. A few parents also feel that the students carry too much responsibility; the amount of contact teaching has been cut, and the amount of independent study and distance learning has increased. The majority, however, clearly have a good impression of the education.

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Image of vocational education and training 5/8

Young people studying in vocational education and training: 93% of the respondents say that they were accepted as students in the education programme of their first choice. More than a quarter of the respondents study in the field of technology, and slightly less than a quarter study in fields other than those presented in the survey. Awareness of double degrees has increased slightly and is now at 95%.

Young students in vocational education and training **see vocational education and training** as an easy path to employment, for which it provides the necessary practical knowledge and skills. In the qualitative responses, it is mainly seen as a good and more relaxed educational option than general upper secondary education. On-the-job learning and more work-oriented activities are considered to be fun. For the most part, the education has met the expectations, but there is some criticism that sometimes it is "too" relaxed. After vocational education and training, 57% intend to go to work and 16% to a university of applied sciences. There has been a significant drop in satisfaction with the current place of study: In the 2020 survey, 64% were very satisfied, now 45%. For adult students, the development has been the same, 2020: 59% \rightarrow now 49 %. The appreciation of vocational education and training has also fallen in the respondents' perceptions since the last survey: In 2020, 76% responded "*very / fairly appreciated*", and now 67%. Those who responded electronically viewed the situation in a more positive light than the others. They also found it likely that they would study alongside work in the future.





Image of vocational education and training 6/8



Young people in general upper secondary school: General upper secondary school students feel that vocational education and training is more relaxed and flexible than general upper secondary education, and that it enables a rapid transition to the world of work and a focus on a specific field of study. Easier than general upper secondary school. A good option if you know what you want to do and want to enter the world of work faster. Less theory, more practice. A few respondents mention that people choose vocational education and training if they cannot get accepted into general upper secondary education, or if they are not good at theory-based studies.

Awareness of double degrees has increased marginally among the respondents (by 3%), and is now at 97%.

The appreciation of vocational education and training has also fallen in the perceptions of respondents from general upper secondary school since the last survey: 60% responded "*very / fairly appreciated*" in 2020 (60%) and now 50%.



Adult students in vocational education and training: Adult students in vocational education and training consider vocational education and training to be a direct channel to the world of work, providing a wide range of employment and networking opportunities. The studies are versatile and customisable. In general, vocational education and training is considered good and necessary.

In your opinion, how appreciated is vocational education and training as an educational option in general? The share of "Very appreciated" responses has dropped to 8%, compared with 22% in 2020.

The majority have clearly been satisfied with vocational education and training, even though some think that it is not that highly valued. A small number of respondents **criticised the large amount of distance learning**. It is also estimated that there are shortcomings / quality challenges in contact teaching.



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Image of vocational education and training 7/8

Guidance counsellors: Guidance counsellors in basic education have a **realistic image** of vocational education and training, and they are aware of the diversity of sectors and practical nature of studies. The majority of guidance counsellors appreciate vocational education and training and consider it to be sound and of good quality. It is also felt that its appreciation has grown over the years. There is some concern about the reduced funding and resourcing of vocational education and training. The excessive amount of independent study is mentioned several times. The level and quality of education vary both regionally and between schools and sectors. 9% of guidance counsellors find that vocational education and training is generally regarded as very appreciated and 72% as fairly **appreciated**.

According to the guidance counsellors, one third of 9th graders find vocational education and training **very interesting** and less than two thirds find it **fairly interesting**. Approximately four out of ten guidance counsellors estimate that vocational education and training is the most interesting educational option at upper secondary level among 9th graders. The fields of technology are considered the most interesting among 9th graders. The following fields stand out in the open feedback: The electricity sector is by far the most common (electrician and electrical automation are mentioned most often). Logistics, practical nurse / the social welfare and health care sector follow. Business and economics, the automotive sector and the construction sector are also clearly on the rise.



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Image of vocational education and training 8/8

HR professionals: Vocational education and training is generally considered to be of a fairly high standard and the respondents have a **positive impression** of it. When asked how well the graduates from vocational education and training match the professions and tasks for which companies need employees, the results can be seen as developing in a moderately positive direction. Similarly, the quality of vocational education and training is now perceived to be stronger (although this development has become rather more polarised).

However, several individual responses include ideas for development; the consensus is that the **teaching does not fully meet the requirements of the world of work, and concrete competence only accumulates during work placements. The responsibility for the pupil's professional competence has been offloaded too much onto the shoulders of companies**. As a result of the customisation of learning plans and differences between teachers, it may also be unclear what the company is expected to do and when.

When asked "*How well do you think that the* **competence** of people who have completed vocational education and training **matches the requirements of the world of work**?" the results have deteriorated somewhat; now, only 2% respond "*very well*" (2020: 8%). However, the attitude toward vocational education and training as such is clearly positive, and **83% say that they see it as either** *fairly or very positive*. As many as eight out of ten respondents believe that the need for vocational education and training will increase in Finland in the near future (*it has increased by 37 percent points!*). Nine out of ten expect that, in the next few years, there will be a shortage of experts who have completed vocational education and training or a vocational qualification.



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Image of general upper secondary education

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For the most part, the interviewees' perceptions of general upper secondary education are also good – general upper secondary education is perceived to provide a good level of general education and to be beneficial for the future.



9th graders: Think of general upper secondary education as a form of education that **requires more studying and an independent approach**. Young people also wondered how they would manage and cope with their general upper secondary education, should they apply. In the respondents' view, general upper secondary education is considered to involve a lot of reading and**theory-based and general studies**. Some expect it to be arduous and challenging. **Half (48%) of the respondents** in grade 9 are planning to apply to general upper secondary education after basic education.

Parents of 9th graders: Ninth graders' parents consider general upper secondary education a good option in terms of developing the young person's **study skills** as well as preparing them for **studies at tertiary level**. They also think that upper secondary school pupils are more equipped to make decisions about their future than 9th graders. **Six out of ten** respondents (58%) would select general upper secondary education as a suitable option for their child. In the eyes of parents, the appreciation of general upper secondary education has fallen from two years ago: 47% now consider it very appreciated, compared with 57% in 2020. General upper secondary education is clearly appreciated and considered to be a good form of general education, but it is stated to be only an intermediate stage before further studies and provide the student some time to think. Many parents view general upper secondary education as laborious and demanding. The level of general upper secondary education is mainly considered to be of a high quality.

Young people in vocational education and training: Young students in vocational education and training perceive general upper secondary education as acomputer-based and theoryoriented education that prepares students for future studies. It is viewed as reading-oriented and theory-based, strenuous, challenging and difficult. "*Gives you some time to think*" about further studies. For certain professions and further studies, it is considered a better alternative than vocational education and training.



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Adult students in vocational education and

Image of general upper

secondary education 2/5

training: Think that general upper secondary education provides a good foundation for further studies and is particularly suitable for **students who need more time to think**. A quarter of the respondents (26%) regard general upper secondary education as a highly valued educational option. General upper secondary education **is considered a good choice in terms of further studies and general education**. It is thought to be theory-based and reading-oriented, and, consequently, not suitable for everyone. General upper secondary education is valued, but some say that the appreciation has fallen in recent years.



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Image of general upper secondary education 3/5

General upper secondary school students: General upper secondary school students find general upper secondary education labour-intensive and demanding. Students in general upper secondary education need to be **independent and self-directed**. A great deal of **reading and theory**. The **study pace is much faster** than in vocational education and training. In addition, students spend their leisure time completing the copious amounts of homework. A good choice if you are not in a hurry to start working. On the other hand, there are also differences. Some people find upper secondary school studies tougher, some easier.

Although 96% of respondents say that they were accepted as students in the education programme of their first choice, **there has also been a significant drop in** general upper secondary school students' **satisfaction with their current study place**: In the 2020 study, 66% were very satisfied, now 48%. Although eight out of ten respondents consider the degree they are currently completing to be useful in terms of employment, and nine out of ten consider it useful in terms of further studies, (only?) three out of four would choose the same study place if they had to choose again.

Four out of ten students plan to continue to a university after general upper secondary school, less than one fifth are not sure what to do, and 15% plan to take a year out.



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Image of general upper secondary education 4/5

Guidance counsellors in basic education: Guidance counsellors emphasise the role of general upper secondary education as a provider of general education.

According to guidance counsellors, half of 9th graders find general upper secondary education very interesting and half find it fairly interesting. Half of the guidance counsellors believe that 9th graders are most drawn to general upper secondary school as an educational option. General upper secondary education is seen as laborious and even exhausting for young people. However, general upper secondary education is mainly regarded as a respected and high-quality form of education with a theoretical focus. A few respondents mention and reflect on the fact that the significance of matriculation examinations has become overemphasised.

Less than **two out of three** guidance counsellors (62%) are of the opinion that general upper secondary education is generally regarded as **very appreciated** and **more than a third** (37%) **think it is fairly appreciated**.



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Image of general upper secondary education 5/5

HR professionals: HR professionals consider general upper secondary school as important in itself, and essential for higher education studies. Students in general upper secondary education are regarded **as determined on the one hand, and slightly uncertain on the other**, as their plans may still be open. A clear majority of respondents consider general upper secondary education to be of high quality. Its role as **a provider of general education** is highlighted a great deal.

The complexity of general upper secondary education is again highlighted by some respondents. There are also some slightly **critical comments about the relationship between general upper secondary education and work**: as such, general upper secondary education does not have any links to the world of work. A couple of respondents mention that they do not have any employees with only a general upper secondary education.

HR professionals commented more critically about the match between the competence and work requirements of graduates from general upper secondary education in comparison to those from vocational training and education: Nearly half (46%) of the respondents think that general upper secondary education meets the needs of the world of work *fairly or very poorly* (in vocational education and training, the equivalent figure is 18%).

However, the attitude toward general upper secondary education as such is clearly positive, and 85% see it as either fairly or very positive. Nine out of ten HR professionals think that general upper secondary education is generally regarded as **very appreciated or fairly appreciated**.

Approximately half of the HR respondents assessed the quality of general upper secondary education in Finland to be excellent or very good.



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Image of vocational adult education and training

Adult students in vocational education and training: The studies are versatile and customisable. In general, vocational education and training is considered good and necessary. The majority have clearly been satisfied with vocational education and training, even though some think that it is not that highly valued. A small number of respondents criticised the large amount of distance learning. It is also estimated that there are some shortcomings / quality challenges in contact teaching.

One fifth of the respondents in vocational adult education and training are mainly studying in the health and wellbeing sector, one fifth in the field of technology, and one third in a field other than those listed in the survey. Awareness of the double degree and eligibility for further studies have increased slightly (+2 and +4 percentage points). The share of those who are very satisfied with their current place of study has clearly dropped $59\% \rightarrow 49\%$.

96% of the respondents consider the degree they are currently completing useful in terms of work, more than eight out of ten consider it useful in terms of further studies, and the same number of respondents would choose the same study place if they had to choose again.

Despite these strong results, adult students in vocational education and training estimated that the appreciation of education and training has fallen in recent years: The share of "*Regarded as very appreciated*" responses has dropped to 8%, while in 2020, it was still 22%.

Survey on the image of upper secondary education 2022

Image of double degrees 1/2

The interviewees are all aware of the possibility to complete a double degree, and it is considered a good yet challenging option. Particularly the scheduling and overlapping of studies are seen as challenging.

Ninth graders think that a double degree provides the best parts of both degrees. On the other hand, they estimate that the implementation is rather burdensome and they find it a little difficult to understand how to complete it in practice. Four per cent (4%) of the respondents in grade 9 will apply for a double degree as their first choice after basic education.

The **parents of 9th graders** consider the double degree to be too laborious an option. They would not necessarily encourage their own child to apply for it, but it is good to offer the double degree as an option for those interested.

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Young students in vocational education and

training consider the double degree to be a challenging option. On the other hand, they regard it as positive that if students change their mind, they can choose either direction.







Image of double degrees 2/2

Adult students in vocational education and

training find the double degree particularly useful for those who are planning to continue their studies in higher education. However, they estimate that it may require an even more independent and systematic approach from the student.

In their responses, **students in general upper secondary school** reflect on how to maintain motivation for both degrees and how to practically combine the studies for different degrees. Nevertheless, a double degree is considered a sensible option, but it is suspected to be even more laborious than general upper secondary studies.

Guidance counsellors in basic education say that
they propose it as an option, but feel that a double
degree is of little interest to young people due to its
complexity.

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HR professionals consider a double degree to be a versatile but demanding qualification not suitable for everyone.



Image of the TUVA and TELMA education programmes

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According to the interviewees, these educational options are clearly less known than the other types of education.

Ninth graders do not know much about these forms of education, and some assume they are related to the earlier 'grade 10'. Only one per cent (1%) of the respondents in grade 9 are planning to choose TUVA (preparatory education for programmes leading to an upper secondary qualification), and one per cent (1%) are planning to choose TELMA (preparatory education for working life and independent living) after basic education.

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The **parents of 9th graders** are not really familiar with these forms of education, but they consider it very important to find a suitable alternative for everyone and, if necessary, for the young person to receive support and additional time before their next studies.



Young students in vocational education and training were not at all familiar with these forms of education or only remembered having heard the abbreviations. Adult students in vocational education and training werenot at all familiar with these forms of education.

About half of the students interviewed in general upper secondary school knew enough about these forms of education to comment that it is good that there are plenty of options and that this is a good way to ensure that no one will be left behind and everyone can make progress.

Guidance counsellors in basic education are aware of these forms of education, but it is somewhat unclear to them how the education is organised in practice. According to the guidance counsellors, there have not been many applicants for the programmes.

HR professionals are not very familiar with these forms of
education, but consider it absolutely essential to have options
and a chance to search for your own direction.



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Summary of results I – qualitative part I/II

Those applying to upper secondary education wish to **receive concrete information** about their potential place of study. The best method is considered to be a student's and/or graduate's personal stories about their studies and study place, as well as graduates' and jobseekers' experiences of their transition to employment, as well as information about work in the field in general. Adult students in vocational education and training suggest that their experiences and thoughts about studies should be further highlighted.

Visits to educational institutions and different

work trials are considered good methods. The interviewees also hope to receive information about their possible future learning environment, facilities and teachers. It is hoped that **modern methods**, such as videos, will be used to provide such information.

Ensuring enough resources for guidance

counselling. The young interviewees say that they have received enough information about upper secondary education, but there are differences in emphasis – some basic education institutions place more emphasis on vocational education and training, and some highlight general upper secondary education. Both students in vocational education and training as well as parents of 9th graders think that students who do not really want to be in vocational education and training should not end up there. **All respondents emphasise the student's own motivation for the selected education**.



Summary of results I – qualitative part II/II

According to the interviewees, there has been more talk of upper secondary education than before, for example, **as a result of the extension of compulsory education and the effects of coronavirus** on studying. There is also a desire to raise the value of vocational education and training.

Young people and adults studying in vocational education and training see both benefits and challenges in **young people and adults studying together**. The parents of upper secondary school students and grade 9 pupils are **particularly concerned that the expectations and pressures felt by upper secondary school students** will continue to grow.

The respondents hope that **the stark comparisons** between general upper secondary education and vocational education and training **will come to an end**, and that less importance is given to the **rankings between different general upper secondary schools**.



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Summary of results II – quantitative part I/II

All forms of upper secondary education are mainly regarded to be very appreciated and of high quality. The respondents' awareness has developed positively in terms of, for example, the double degree and eligibility for further studies. The **positive signals** in the responses include the perceived increase in the appreciation of vocational education and training and, in the questions anticipating the future, a clear increase in demand for vocational education and training. General upper secondary education is perceived to be of a very high quality and to provide a good level of general education. Its overall appreciation is clearly stronger than that of vocational education and training (even according to young people studying in upper secondary vocational education and training). TUVA and TELMA are clearly the least known educational options, but the respondents had very positive attitudes toward them.



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Summary of results II – quantitative part II/II

Innolink also identifies clear and **noteworthy development needs** in the results:

- a. The appreciation of upper secondary education shows a slightly downward trend across almost all respondent groups. In addition, the students' (young people and adults) satisfaction with their current study place has dropped significantly from the previous research cycle in both vocational education and training and in general upper secondary schools.
- b. It can be considered worrying that almost one fifth of the respondents in grade 9 say that they feel that they have not received sufficient guidance to support their choice of upper secondary education; as many as one third of their parents feel the same way. From the perspective of the *quality of guidance* received, it is significant that approximately every sixth guidance counsellor (16%) replied that they do not have an adequate level of knowledge about upper secondary education and the different options in order to do their work.

- c. In the open feedback, **several parents emphasise the child's aptitude / talent** for the studies in question when selecting a study place; however, this perspective is not at all visible in the guidance counsellors' responses regarding the criteria for study guidance. *To what extent has this perspective presented by the parents been taken into account in the work of the guidance counsellors, if at all?*
- d. HR professionals provide critical feedback on the matching of **upper secondary level graduates' competence and the needs of the world of work** and the responsibilities of companies. However, the target group is very positive about both forms of education.
- e. While guidance counsellors and parents play the strongest role in informing 9th graders about upper secondary education (72% received information from guidance counsellors and 57% from parents), their opinions are considered to have the least effect on the selection of a study place of all the criteria measured ("very influential", guidance counsellors 4%, parents 6%). What does this imbalance suggest?





Ammatti ____ osaaja 1