

Finland: Paving the Way for Youngsters Entering VET (JOPA)

Type of provider

Apprenticeship training involves students, their employers, educational institutions and apprenticeship training offices, which are located in municipalities around the country. Omnia serves students and companies in the Espoo region and beyond.

Objectives

Alternative way of acquiring a vocational qualification, with a strong focus on learning in practice, outside school. Combines work and studies, so that around 80% of the learning occurs at the workplace, with 20% theoretical studies at an educational institution.

Assessment approaches

Initial evaluation, self-assessment. Vocational skills demonstration. Qualification: graded 1-3 or pass/fail.

Target Group

Apprenticeship training is suitable for both youths and adults; the minimum age is 15, with no upper limit. Students may have been unemployed before. Often apprenticeships are particularly suitable for adults. The number of immigrants in apprenticeship training is growing, but certain language skills are necessary.

Potential transferability/ scalability

Single fee of 58€, education free otherwise. If the student was previously unemployed, employment services may compensate the employer by paying a share of the student's salary. Students are paid according to the collective agreements for their fields. Other labour legislation also applies to the employment relationship. The Finnish vocational education reform affects apprenticeship training (e.g. number of degrees).

Summaries or Basic elements of analysis

Apprenticeship training offers youths and adults a way of acquiring a vocational qualification by learning a vocation in practice. Students are employees with a salary; labour legislation applies to their employment contracts. Highly employable after training, their vocational skills are often stronger than those of their peers, who have earned a qualification without apprenticeship training.

Introduction in keywords

- Apprenticeship Training
- Finland
- acquiring vocational qualifications through apprenticeship training
- much of the learning takes place at the workplace (roughly 80%)
- theoretical studies at an educational institution
- vocational skills demonstration
- students are employees (with salary, labour legislation)

5 areas descriptive text

Organisation and Description of the tool(s) (which skills are assessed)

Apprenticeship training is an alternative way of acquiring a qualification, which is equal to a vocational qualification without apprenticeship training and gives the students the same right to practice their vocation and apply to tertiary education. It combines work and studies with an even stronger focus on learning in practice, by having much of the learning take place outside school, at the workplace.

There is an employment relationship between the student and their employer. The other parties to the apprenticeship contract are the educational institution, which organises the theoretical studies, and the apprenticeship training office, which is responsible for any practical issues. There are apprenticeship offices in municipalities around the country. Kirsti Hakoniemi is a specialist from Omnia, the Joint Authority of Education in the Espoo Region, where the apprenticeship office was recently merged with career and business services. Hakoniemi, who is in charge of apprenticeship training in certain fields, tells us her work involves a great deal of business cooperation, informing clients of the possibilities of apprenticeship training. She is also involved in signing apprenticeship contracts

Implementation (how the tool is used, how the assessors are trained, how often it is used)

Much of the learning occurs at the workplace— apprenticeship training includes at least 25 hours of work per week – roughly an 80-20 per cent divide. In addition to this, the student attends an educational institution for their theoretical studies a few days each month. Hakoniemi points out that the theory portion simply complements the learning that occurs at the workplace.

When the student has found a workplace and a degree to pursue, apprenticeship training begins with an initial interview or assessment of what the student already knows, for example from previous work experience, compared to the requirements for the qualification. A personal study plan is then made, although it may be adjusted during the training, depending on the student's progress.

Apprenticeship training takes anywhere from four to thirty-six months, depending on the qualification, the student's abilities and experience. It may begin with a trial period, no longer than four months. To receive the qualification, the students participate in a competence or vocational skills demonstration. Depending on the degree, they receive either a grade on a scale of 1-3 (vocational upper secondary qualification) or a pass/fail (further vocational qualifications and specialist vocational qualifications). Apart from a single fee of 58€, education is free.

Description of the target groups

Apprenticeship training is possible for both youths and adults. The minimum age is 15, but there is no upper limit. Contrary to many other countries, Finnish apprenticeship training has proven suitable for and has been very popular with adults. Younger students are sometimes not mature or self-motivated enough to balance studying and working.

Another requirement is being active. Those willing to do apprenticeship training need to figure out what qualification they are interested in, but also find a workplace to train at. Students may have been unemployed before training starts. Moreover, the number of immigrants in apprenticeship training is growing. However, certain language skills are necessary.

Policy context

Apprenticeships are an old form of training, which dates back to the 1800s, with legislation from the 20th century. Finnish apprenticeship training has similarities to other European systems, but there is no age limit. However, the government has given strong signals that prior learning must be recognised and validated. Vocational education is currently undergoing a big reform, which also affects apprenticeship training.

The students are paid for their work according to the collective agreements for their fields. Although this does not necessarily reflect their initial abilities, they become more and more productive during their apprenticeship, so that it pays off for the employer. At the end of their training, their skills may far exceed their pay. Other labour legislation also applies to the employment contract.

As students in apprenticeship training are employees, they are not entitled to student allowance. However, they receive a daily allowance for the study days, unless those are covered by their salary. They may also be compensated, for instance, for travel expenses. If the student was previously unemployed, employment services may support the apprenticeship training by paying a share of the student's salary.

Impact for assessees

Employers value apprenticeship training, and the students are highly employable. Companies may also want to school their current employees or recruit new personnel through this kind of an arrangement. Students who have gone through apprenticeship training often have stronger vocational skills than those of their peers, who have earned a qualification without apprenticeship training. Sometimes students who have graduated from vocational education are not quite ready to work independently, because despite their qualifications, they lack some of the necessary practical skills. In apprenticeship training, students practice their vocation at an actual workplace from day one.

Apprenticeship training suits students who are active and independent, and those who learn better outside classrooms. One student with a background that included substance abuse found it difficult to study in a school. Through individual training, he was able to acquire his qualification ahead of schedule and became employed afterwards.

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