What can the Finnish VET system learn from the other Nordic countries?

Marja-Leena Stenström
Introduction

✧ Considerations points for comparing and transferring reforms from other countries:
✧ The VET systems are closely interrelated with the historical, cultural and socio-economic contexts.
✧ It is not possible to put any strategy into effect in any country as such.
✧ The history of VET in each country affects present development (e.g. Denmark (work-based) and Finland (school-based))
✧ However, each country can learn good practices from the other countries.
✧ In addition, it is good to remember that every system has its strengths and weaknesses.
### Attractiveness of VET in the Nordic countries

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Finland</th>
<th>Sweden</th>
<th>Norway</th>
<th>Denmark</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Immediate continuation of studies in VET</td>
<td>41.5%</td>
<td>36.0%</td>
<td>32.8%</td>
<td>19.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population</td>
<td>5,400 Million</td>
<td>9,482 Million</td>
<td>4,985 Million</td>
<td>5,580 Million</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Characteristics of the Finnish VET

✧ The popularity of vocational education and training has increased since the early 2000s. The year of 2009 was the first year when the majority of applicants listed a VET programme as their primary choice.
✧ The Finnish VET is not the second choice for young people.
✧ The Finnish school-based VET includes work-related learning (on-the-job learning and vocational skills demonstrations). It could be seen as also a ‘hybrid’ system.
✧ A vocational qualification gives general eligibility for higher education studies.
✧ The establishment of polytechnics guarantees the systematic route to HE. One of the key educational principle is lifelong learning.
✧ Apprenticeship is mainly for adults.
Challenges of the Finnish VET

- To improve the links between VET institutions and the world of work
- To develop the Finnish apprenticeship system
- To decrease the dropping out, although it has gone down in recent years.
- To develop the VET system to be more responsive to heterogeneous student population (ability, social, ethnic and gender background).
- To meet new demands of the changing working life and competence requirements (e.g. globalisation, digitalisation).
What to learn from the Danish VET

- In Denmark, the highest priority is *achievement of vocational qualifications and employability of apprentices*.
- Dual system has a *strong connection to labour market* and *smooth access to labour market*.
- The system provides qualifications that prepare for a high degree of flexibility and mobility on the labour market.
- *Employer organisations* take more *responsibility for the administration* and search of *the apprenticeship training places*.
- The idea of *the Practicum model* is that the student, the company and the school jointly define a developmental project or a work task which involves both the company and the school.
- > Danish VET is work-based system, a long tradition in apprenticeship, taking account the context
What to learn from the Norwegian VET?

- **2+2 system**: Apprenticeship system integrated part of the formal education system. Challenge is connections between apprenticeship system and HE.
- Apprenticeship system has been funded by the state and private enterprises.
- A high level trust among stakeholders, a strong cooperation between VET and the world of work.
- Local Training Agencies (LTAs) was launched as an important policy instrument for apprentice training reform.
- Special track in "technical general studies" (TAF) integrates the full VET programme with a full general education and practical experience.
  - A comprehensive 4 year track ends with both a Journeyman’s Certificate and university and college admissions certification. Cf. In Finland, the double qualification combines a general upper secondary education certificate and VET qualification.
What to learn from the Swedish VET?

✧ The 2011-reform (GY-11) of upper secondary school can be seen as part of a broader policy-trend toward the world of work. Establishment of apprenticeship programmes.

✧ The main problem is that there are lacking well-established traditions of apprenticeship in the gymnasium.

✧ In addition, the apprenticeship programmes lack a fix structure between school-based VET and workplace-based learning and a long-term perspective on future demands in the labour market and economy.

✧ The development of Technical College. This case represents innovative ways of organizing cooperation between three central parties in the field of initial VET, employers, unions and schools.

> Post-secondary VET is almost lacking in Finland, e.g. technician.
Challenges of VET in the Nordic countries

The Nordic countries have different VET systems, but the same challenges to meet.

✧ Attractiveness of VET
✧ Cooperation between education and working life
✧ Access to labour market, graduates’ skills, knowledge, competences to labour market
✧ Drop-outs
✧ Changes in labour market (e.g. globalisation, digitalisation) > changes in learning environments
✧ Indidual learning pathways and learning environments
### Similarities and differences between the Nordic countries

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Similarities/differences</th>
<th>Denmark</th>
<th>Norway</th>
<th>Finland</th>
<th>Sweden</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>School-/work-based learning</strong></td>
<td>Work-based learning Apprenticeship</td>
<td>Mixed Both school- and work-based learning (apprenticeship)</td>
<td>School-based learning including work-based period</td>
<td>School-based learning + Apprenticeship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Links with employers</strong></td>
<td>Strong links; apprenticeship</td>
<td>Improving links with employers</td>
<td>Improving links with employers</td>
<td>Weak links with employers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Links with HE</strong></td>
<td>Weak connection, dead end</td>
<td>Temporary basis</td>
<td>Eligibility to HE</td>
<td>Eligibility to HE, but not automatic</td>
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</table>
What kind of VET is needed in the future?

- What kind of skills, knowledge, competence are needed in the future work?
- How are skills developed? In what context?
- How can education and employment complete each other in lifelong learning?
Thank you for your attention!

- Further information:
- Marja-Leena Stenström
- marja-leena.stenstrom@jyu.fi