

VET in building and construction – comparing the Nordic countries



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Two comparative case studies

2015:

- National case studies on carpenters and auxiliary nurses.
- Multi-level case study design based on literature reviews and interviews
- Focus on four challenges:
 - transitions to labour market
 - transition to higher education
 - social inclusion
 - esteem.

2016:

- Comparative analysis based on the national case studies.

Finland

**Country
Report**

Sweden

**Country
Report**

Denmark

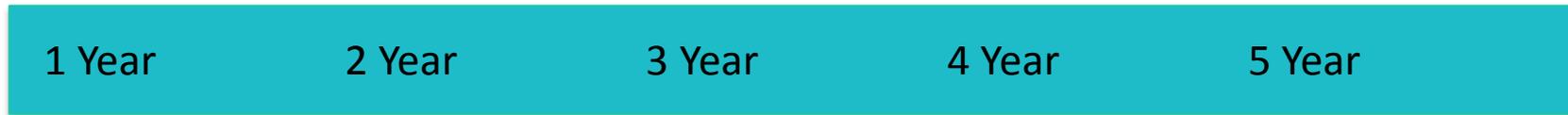
**Country
Report**

Norway

**Country
Report**

Significant differences in the arrangement
of school-to work transitions between the
four countries

Length of standard program



Sweden

3 + 2

Gymnasium: Building and Construction program

Final apprenticeship in the construction sector

School-based
basic course

School-based basic courses +
15 weeks work-based learning

Work-based

Norway

2+ 2

VET in the Gymnasium

Apprenticeship in company

School-based
basic courses 1-2

Work-based 1-2

Denmark

1 + 3

VET-school

Work-based learning (WBL) in apprenticeship

School-based
basic course

WBL

WBL

WBL

WBL

WBL

Finland

3 Year

Module-
structure

National curriculum

Vocational subject modules 90 credits, WBL 20 c.
Core subject moduls, 20 credits, Free choice, 15 c. ,

Basic characteristics - similarities

- Strong anchoring in the construction industry
- The skilled worker concept important
- Organisation of work: high level of variability, flexibility and temporary work
- The significance of the working-team.
- Strong ties between VET and apprenticeship – even in Sweden
- Strong gender division
- Low share of ethnic minorities (No, Da, Fin); increasing in Sweden.

The VET-system challenged by labour market change

- Globalization and employee mobility
- Changed recruitment patterns
- Neo-taylorism: the skilled worker concept under pressure
- Prefabrication and technological development
- More narrow skills vs. demands for multi-skilled workers

- E.g. higher skills demands for carpenters in construction to have more client-orientation, be able to team work with international colleagues, skills in occupational safety, and energy economy.
- (Finnish case report, 2015).

Comparing the countries with respect to the four challenges

1. Transition to work
2. Access/Transition to Higher Education
3. Status/Attractiveness
4. Social inclusion

1. Transitions to labour market

- Strong ties between VET and the construction sector promotes smooth transitions
- VET-students in construction get permanent positions easier than Health & Care students (Norway and Sweden).
- Critical passage: school based VET – apprenticeship:
 - Access to training placements a challenge (particularly in economic recessions)
 - Many drop outs among females and ethnic minorities, and students heading for post-secondary education.

Bridging school-based VET and apprenticeship



School-based training



Apprenticeship

Learning to "know what" and "why"

"you become a more rounded carpenter by having the school based part, because you can then explain why you do it...."

Social safety net:

"School-based practical training, it's a life-saver..."

Learning "how to do it"

"we learn how to make money"

"You become a part of a work gang and learn the tricks..."

Mismatch between school and apprenticeship?

- Main challenge: provide coherence in the students learning across school and work based learning
- Students often perceive these two learning environments as separate worlds
- Tension between school curriculum and the logic of production (e.g. economic factors vs. training needs).
- Denmark: no institutions bind the two learning environments together
- Sweden: tripartite talks between apprentice, journeyman and teacher
- Finland – quality assessment of learning at work e.g. skills demonstrations (cooperation between school-workplace)

Competing logics for organising VET for construction work

Educational logic:

State-governed school-based VET to support life long learning and employment based on generic and broad work related skills
(Sweden; school-based part of VET)

Organizational principle:

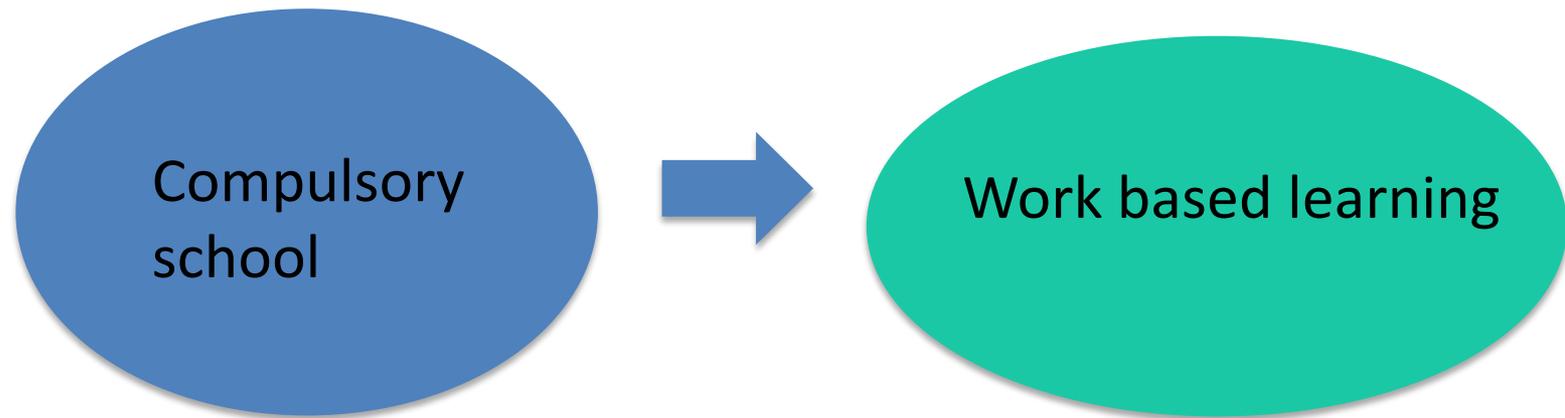
High level of individualisation and modularisation; focus on broad qualification profiles and fostering multi-skilled workers
(Finland in the lead)

Employment logic:

Work based training organised by labour market organisations to support specific occupational skills and foster specific occupational identities (Denmark, Norway).

Access to work based learning requires more preparatory school-based vocational training:

E.g. Denmark 1 year; Norway 2 years; Sweden 2-3 years.



Prolonged transition

Challenge: How to give students faster access to work based learning after compulsory school?

Some institutional innovations:

Attempts to create more space for work based learning in the school-based part of VET.

Example: In-depth project in Norway

Social inclusive function – Important to motivate school-tired students to get access to alternative forms of learning.

At local school level – many local examples across the countries where the first year in initial VET provides a broad introduction in different occupations in the construction industry.

- Promotes vocational guidance and work against early specialisation.

2. Transition to Higher Education

Arguments why access to HE is important?

- The equal rights discourse
- Meet knowledge-society-requirements
- Employers ask for high educated people with strong occupational skills
- Status

- Different formal options for progress to Higher education OR Higher vocational education
- Norway and Denmark additional preparatory/supplementary courses needed for access to HE (extension or hybridization)
- Finland and Sweden more "straightforward"
- **But even so: students seldom move further to HE or HVE**
- Finland: formal access but less than 1 % go to HE 5 % to HVE.
- Sweden: formal access and 3-7 % HE
- Norway: 1 % HE, 4 % HVE, Denmark: < 0,5 % HE, 4 % Profession Bachelour
- "Horizontally" there is emphasis on integration between general subjects and vocational subjects, but the "vertical" links between VET and H(V)E are weak.
- Conclusion: transition to HE is not only about formal arrangements but also about young peoples' 'educational decision making'
- and here class and gender are influent

How come class and gender are more influent when it comes to some educations (for example building and construction) and less influent in other educations?

3. Social inclusion

- Young people with low grades develop occupational skills, identity, pride and access to skilled employment
- But the participants does not mirror the population
- Very few middle class students
- Very few female students
- Drop out rate vary from 10 % (Finland) to 50 % (Norway)

4. Esteem/Attractiveness

- The concept of esteem: different dimensions
- Building and construction popular among male working class people
- Differences WITHIN program: carpenter higher popularity and esteem among students
- A weak learners program?
- Norway: building and construction are popular but even so 30 percent less applicants than available places
- In Finland applicants and places are in parity

How attract/include people with high educated parents in the construction program?

How attract/include 'strong learners' in the construction program?

Conclusions

- The similarities between VET for construction are more striking than the differences
- Similar occupational principle for the organisation of work in construction due to
 - Long traditions of distinct occupations
 - Organisation of work depend on similar conditions
- The particular educational culture as affecting both esteem and social inclusion
- Challenges: skilled employment vs taylorism
- Globalization, neo-liberalism and labour mobility
- Future challenges: Linking school based VET, work based training and access to Higher education

Esteem and Higher education

A voice from the Swedish trade union regarding the 2011-reform and the division between VET-programs and general programs:

Immediately it became an outcry [in the trade union]... it was experienced as an unjust reform in a sense that workers are being looked into, people who take a vocational education, into one box, and then there should be another, little more superior box, meant for people who take the higher education preparatory programmes

/.../ one separated between people intended to work with their head and think, and people who should work with their hands. One has not really understood what vocational, what skilled worker does, that it can be rather advanced.

(Trade union representative, Sweden)

Gender, equality, discrimination?

- A campaign and discussion in Swedish media
- Trade union and managers organization in cooperation
- www.stoppamachokulturen.nu

bygg
cheferna **b**

HEM OM BYGGCHEFRNA CHEFSSTÖD AMBASSADÖRSPROGRAM #STOPPAMACHOKULTUREN BLI MEDLEM LEDIGA JOBB

Sök

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Utrotta machokulturen

UTROTA MACHOKULTUREN

Ett par av de viktigaste frågorna vi på Byggcheferna jobbar med är mångfald och jämställdhet. Alla ska mottas på och ha samma förutsättningar att trivas och utvecklas i branschen. I en enkät vi nyligen gjort bland 800 kvinnor i byggbranschen, visar det sig dock att vi har långt kvar innan det är ett faktum på alla arbetsplatser. Siffrorna visar att många upplever en kultur som motverkar mångfald och jämställdhet. En förlegad kultur, som i vissa fall leder till ett kompetensbortfall, då människor väljer att lämna branschen på grund av dessa anledningar.

Enkäten visar bland annat:

- Nio av tio kvinnor i byggbranschen upplever att den är ojämlig och många funderar på att byta jobb
- Sex av tio anser att det sker ett betydande kompetensbortfall på grund av upplevd grabbighet och machokultur inom byggbranschen (64%)
- En tredjedel känner till en eller flera som lämnat branschen på grund av upplevd grabbighet och machokultur (33%)
- En majoritet av respondenterna anger att det inte är bara kvinnor som lämnar branschen på grund av detta.
- En av fem av de kvinnor som fortfarande arbetar i byggbranschen har övervägt att lämna den på grund av detta (18%)

Det här är givetvis inte acceptabelt. Vi är medvetna om att det tas många initiativ och redan görs mycket för att motverka utvecklingen, men siffrorna visar att det inte är tillräckligt. Nu krävs att hela byggbranschen engagerar sig gemensamt i arbetet med att motverka denna utveckling och komma tillrätta med problemen. Vi på Byggcheferna kommer att driva arbetet.

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NU FÖRÄNDRAR VI BYGGBRANSCHEN!

VI HAR BESTÄMT OSS!

Det är dags är att göra upp med fördomar, myter och machokultur i byggbranschen. Det är vår största satsningen någonsin mot en modern bransch där människor inte begränsas på grund av könstjänar på en jämställd byggbransch. Är du med oss? [Läs mer](#)

Equal access to higher education : a "historical drama"

- Policy-driven attempts to increase equal access to higher education in VET
- **Counter-initiatives by employers**
- Denmark: maintain apprenticeship in modern form
- Norway: 2 + 2 reform to maintain apprenticeship separate from school-based VET.
- Finland: Vocational turn – adding 6 month of work based learning in all VET-programs
- Sweden: employers and unions organise independent final apprenticeship in construction.