

OECD Vocational Education and Training and Adult Learning News

January 2018

Please feel free to forward this newsletter to colleagues who may be interested in learning about our work

In this newsletter, we focus on the work of the OECD VET team over the last year and highlight what can be expected over the next twelve months:

- * [New video introducing our work](#)
- * [Published in 2017](#) – new works on apprenticeships, basic skills and strategic skills development, etc.
- * [Coming up in 2018...](#)
- * [Picks of the year](#)
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Watch this... and learn more about our work

Project Lead, Anthony Mann, introduces the work of the OECD vocational education and training and adult learning team. Click on the image below to watch the video.



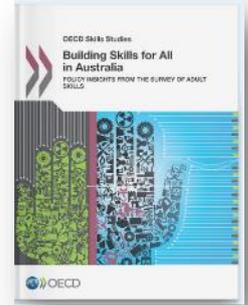
Published in 2017

Striking the Right Balance: Costs and Benefits of Apprenticeship looks at who pays for - and who gains from - apprenticeships from the vantage point of society as a whole, the employer and the individual apprentice. The paper asks: how much should apprentices be paid? What is the best balance between on- and off-the-job training? What should be expected of employers? Should a special case be made for smaller employers? Read the working paper [here](#).

Incentives for Apprenticeships looks at financial incentives for employers to take on apprentices and finds that they are likely to have modest effects and will often involve substantial deadweight. For governments keen to see the expansion of apprenticeships, non-financial incentives such as high-quality standards and supporting in-company training can be much more effective. The paper explores the rationales for governments to intervene and provide incentives to employers for offering apprenticeships, considers some of the pitfalls of incentive programmes and argues that smaller employers should be treated differently from larger employers. Read the working paper [here](#).

A Skills beyond School Commentary on Viet Nam. This short report was funded by the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) and contributes to a larger study of Viet Nam's industrial skills training system. It distils policy pointers for Viet Nam, focused around a selected set of key issues: how to strengthen employer engagement, promote high quality work-based learning, ensure an adequately skilled VET teacher workforce and implement a qualifications framework. Read the report [here](#).

Building Skills for All in Australia: Policy Insights from the Survey of Adult Skills is the latest in the series of reports exploring key skills challenges (low adult literacy and numeracy) emerging from the Survey of Adult Skills ([PIAAC](#)). The review describes the characteristics of the low-skilled and discusses the consequences that low skills have on economic and social development for both individuals and Australian society. Read the report [here](#).



Directorate for Education and Skills Blog. Our contributions in 2017:

[Why it matters if you can't read this](#). This blog post accompanied the release of the report Building Skills for All in Australia: Policy Insights from the Survey of Adult Skills. Tanja Bastianic, Statistician.

[How students attitudes towards the value of education can be shaped by careers education - evidence from the OECD's PISA study](#). Anthony Mann, Project Lead.

Coming up in 2018...

Work-based learning in VET

Over the last two years, we have undertaken six connected reviews on the role of work-based learning in vocational education and training [[link](#)]. A **synthesis report** will be published in the summer of 2018, drawing together insights from the different strands of the work.

Before that, two final working papers will be published early in 2018:

Work-based Learning and Career Guidance

The paper explores why career guidance is more important than ever and how it can best prepare young people for the transition from education into working life. It reviews the available scientific literature on career guidance, looks at what makes for great career guidance and focuses on why it is so important to involve employers and employees in its delivery. This paper also presents new analysis of PISA data showing how career ambitions are shaped by social background.

Making Skills Transparent: Recognising Vocational Skills Acquired Through Work-based Learning

The paper looks at how to give formal recognition to vocational skills acquired through work-based learning and how such mechanisms might be best developed. The paper argues that a strong process for skill recognitions for adult learners is an essential characteristic of a high performing VET system; sets out mechanisms through which vocational skills can be recognised and reflected in qualifications; and identifies potential barriers, and the policy tools that help make the most of effective skill recognition.

To stay in touch with our work, download our regular newsletters and/or follow Project Lead Anthony Mann on Twitter - [@AnthonyMannOECD](#)

Country specific reviews

A number of reports are due to be published during 2018 on Bulgaria, England (UK), Estonia and Israel. Here is a little taster about what to expect.

A Review of Vocational Education and Training in Bulgaria

We continue our review work with non-member countries with a new project with Bulgaria that will focus particularly on the most effective funding and governance mechanisms in VET. On governance, issues to be examined include how to engage stakeholders into the system at different levels and how to ensure co-operation and synergy in order to avoid overlapping or overburdening of responsibilities at national, regional and local levels. On funding, it looks, for example, at how Bulgaria can use funding as a key tool to steer the system - to achieve quality, efficiency, labour market responsiveness and wider supply.

A Review of Apprenticeship in England

Reforms currently being pursued in England include a review of the content of apprenticeship programmes and how they are assessed and a complete restructuring of funding through the introduction of the apprenticeship levy. The English government aims to expand apprenticeships, including in the public sector, to reach 3 million apprenticeship starts by 2020. The report compares the English apprenticeship system to those of other leading apprenticeship countries, drawing extensively on the OECD's range of data, knowledge and experience in order to make policy recommendations.

A Review of Vocational Education and Training in Estonia

Few countries have matched the range of reforms that have been pursued in the VET system in Estonia, which include interesting initiatives such as the development of apprenticeships and postsecondary vocational qualifications. Estonians have also demonstrated a keen interest in developing their skills, and adults participate massively in the VET sector, including in apprenticeships. The aim of this report is to assess the strengths and the challenges of the Estonian VET system, looking also at policies and practices in other countries and make policy recommendations on that basis, to make VET work better for young people.

A Review of Vocational Education and Training and Apprenticeship in Israel

The 2014 OECD review of VET in Israel looked primarily at postsecondary VET. More recent developments include new initiatives on apprenticeship and work-based learning, further studies by international bodies and a significant new report by the National Economic Council encouraging a more co-ordinated VET system. This OECD review builds on this sequence of work and draws on the extensive experience of the OECD, as well as the international Survey of Adult Skills (PIAAC), in which Israel participated, and which examined the numeracy, literacy and digital skills of adults (16-65 year-olds). The review assesses the strengths and challenges faced by the VET system in Israel and provides policy options for the reform of apprenticeships and other vocational and training provision.

Picks of the year

Here is a selection of some of the most interesting articles and reports that the members of OECD VET team came across in 2017 - which we would like to share with you.

[So Similar and Yet So Different: A Comparative Analysis of a Firm's Cost and Benefits of Apprenticeship Training in Austria and Switzerland](#)

People often talk about German-speaking countries and their tradition of apprenticeship training. The approach in Austria, Germany and Switzerland has much in common: young people alternate time spent at school and in a workplace to become a skilled worker. Yet a closer look at the nuts and bolts of apprenticeship reveals surprising differences between the three countries. Earlier studies have explored differences between Germany and Switzerland. This recently published report shows that while on average Swiss firms make a profit from offering apprenticeship, Austrian firms incur net costs. The analysis also reveals the main cause for such differences: in Austria apprentices receive a higher pay. One of the

reasons for higher pay is that apprenticeships in Austria compete for young people with a large school-based VET system – an option less readily available in Switzerland. Do Austrian firms then lose money at the end of the day? They don't: they receive subsidies from the state and retain many qualified apprentices as skilled workers, thus saving on recruitment costs, so offering apprenticeship ends up being a worthwhile investment for them.

[Data Entry: Towards the Critical Study of Digital Data and Education](#)

"There was 5 Exabytes of information created between the dawn of civilization through 2003, but that much information is now created every 2 days, and the pace is increasing" said Eric Schmidt from Google.

There is a huge amount of data produced every day, and this, so called "big data" could offer valuable opportunities for education policies. The paper outlines the significance of digital data within education, arguing for increased interest in the topic from educational researchers.

[Measuring the Gig Economy: Current Knowledge and Open Issues](#)

Technology is changing not only the demand for skills but also work organisation. Many goods and services can be directly acquired on-line (e.g. uber, airbnb) and the share of jobs that do not involve a formal employer-employee relationship is growing (gig work). These new forms of employment are difficult to measure. Abraham et al. (2017) discusses difficulties with estimating the stock of non-traditional work arrangements with traditional data sources and suggests how to better measure the gig economy.

[CEDEFOP's public opinion survey on VET](#)

Interest in VET by policy makers is growing, but what do we actually know about people's views on VET? CEDEFOP conducted an opinion survey on the image of VET across EU countries, and interviewed more than 35 000 people. Results show that although VET suffers from a bad reputation compared to general education from those who have gone through general education, nine out of ten VET graduates were happy with their work skills. The survey shows huge misconceptions about VET itself: 70% believe that VET is about manual work, despite the diversity of jobs to which VET now leads. Disturbingly, only half of respondents from general education programmes said that they received information about VET before picking a programme. The survey explores many other facets of VET.

[The Changing Nature and Role of Vocational Education and Training in Europe](#)

Cedefop is undertaking a major research project on the changing nature and role of VET in Europe. In a recently published report "[Changing patterns and future conceptions of VET](#)" policy developments were reviewed that have taken place in the VET systems across the EU countries, Norway and Iceland the past 20 years. It's fascinating to see how VET has evolved in different countries in similar directions. This includes important steps to make VET more relevant to the labour market and attractive to learners, or as CEDEFOP puts it: "VET is apparently becoming more vocational in many European countries".

[The difference that career guidance can make](#)

A growing number of studies are evidencing the difference that access to career guidance can make to the lives of young people. A fascinating seminar at the Centre for Vocational Education Research [\[link\]](#) at the London School of Economics by Swiss scholar Jürg Schweri [\[link\]](#) illustrated the relationships between teenage access to new centres of job information in Germany and the narrowing of gaps in the earnings between young men and women. That work in progress builds on a 2014 study by [Saniter and Siedler](#) which finds, in the same dataset, evidence of improved educational outcomes and smoother school-to-work transitions. The two pieces highlight a growing recognition of the importance of career guidance as a strategic policy tool – and here, the 2017 Careers Strategy [\[link\]](#) from the English Department for Education provides an example of how new research is underpinning new policy approaches.

Stay in touch

This e-newsletter aims to keep you informed about our activities, reports and events.

You can find more information on our [website](#).



Follow Anthony Mann, Project Lead, on [Twitter](#).

[Contact the OECD Vocational Education and Training and Adult Learning team](#)

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