

Vocational Education and Training in Norway

Strengths, Challenges and Recommendations

STRENGTHS

Norway has a well-developed upper secondary VET system linked to apprenticeship, which enjoys a high degree of confidence among stakeholders. In particular:

- There is strong tripartite co-operation at national, county and sectoral levels.
- The VET system is supported by a high level of trust among stakeholders.
- By international standards, the system is relatively inclusive and little stigma is attached to VET tracks in upper secondary education.
- In the current exceptionally tight labour market employers are keen to attract apprentices.
- The literacy level of the adult population is high by international standards (IALS, ALLS).

CHALLENGES

- Student choice may limit the responsiveness of VET to the labour market.
- Dropout is a problem.
- The ageing of school-based trainers makes it difficult to recruit new trainers fast enough to match the retirement rate.
- Quality assurance mechanisms for VET are inadequate.
- There are no qualification requirements for enterprise-based trainers and career counsellors.
- The available data are insufficiently exploited and gaps in the data need to be filled.
- PISA results indicate that the basic skills of those entering the VET system are relatively weak.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. To improve the match between VET provision and labour market needs, student choice should be better guided and channelled. Planning of VET provision should take account of the availability of apprenticeship places; counties should reduce programmes that attract few apprenticeships. Students should receive good quality career guidance from well-qualified staff in lower and upper secondary school.
2. To tackle dropout, strengthen interventions in the early childhood and school systems to assist those at risk of dropping out. Use the system's flexibility to keep VET students in school while avoiding initiatives that might increase inequity. Collect better data on the flow of students through education and on the labour market performance of dropouts.
3. Norway's employers receive relatively substantial subsidies for apprenticeship training. Steps should be taken to ensure that the quality of the training provided is commensurate. Undertake a systematic study of the costs, benefits and quality of apprenticeships .
4. The introduction of the Knowledge Promotion Reform provides a useful opportunity to reinforce assessment procedures. Introduce a standardised national assessment of apprentices' practical skills.
5. Workplace supervisors and trainers of apprentices should receive some obligatory training.
6. Enhance data and analysis relating to VET and employ them more routinely in developing policy and career guidance. Consider the establishment of a dedicated centre for VET data and analysis

FURTHER READING

Vocational education and training (VET) has a key economic function in up-skilling and integrating young people into the labour market and in providing high quality technical skills. But in recent decades, VET has been a neglected part of initial education: education policy research and reform have tended to focus primarily on school and tertiary education.

The OECD's policy review of vocational education and training (VET), *Learning for Jobs*, comprises a programme of analytical work and individual country reviews and is designed to help countries make their VET systems more responsive to labour market needs.

[Learning for Jobs, OECD Reviews of Vocational Education and Training Policies, Norway](#) (OECD, 2008) was released in October 2008 and assesses the main challenges faced by the VET system and presents an interconnected package of six policy recommendations. For each recommendation, the report describes the challenge, the recommendation itself, supporting arguments, and issues of implementation.

Further information about the policy review and reports on VET systems in other countries is available on the OECD website www.oecd.org/edu/learningforjobs