

Vocational Education and Training in Sweden

Strengths, Challenges and Recommendations

STRENGTHS

Sweden's upper secondary VET:

- Builds on strong compulsory school performance by international standards at age 15.
- Displays a modest rate of dropout.
- Has relatively high status.
- Allows room for local innovation.

CHALLENGES

- Youth unemployment in Sweden is relatively high.
- The number of 15-19 year-olds is set to decline sharply.
- Upper secondary VET does not attempt to make students 'job ready' – leaving a potential mismatch with a labour market governed by collective agreements in which employers may be reluctant to take on such young people.
- More than half of VET trainers are over 50.
- The separation of school-based VET from a fast-changing and technology-driven workplace makes it hard to keep up with labour market needs.
- Currently, the social partners have limited influence over upper secondary VET.
- Data on labour market outcomes of VET are inadequately exploited – e.g. to provide better information to students choosing courses.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Maintain the current non-selective arrangements for upper secondary school programmes.
2. Establish a National Commission for VET composed of different government ministries and the social partners to provide a stronger mechanism through which employers and employees' representatives can convey labour market requirements to VET providers.
3. Competition between schools needs to be fair and to be seen as fair: scrutinise the regulations to ensure that public and independent schools experience the same regulatory regime.
4. Publish information on the labour market outcomes of VET a school and programme basis. The National Register should be fully exploited, and possibly supplemented by regular surveys of recent leavers.
5. The 15-week work placement that is part of upper secondary VET should be subject to quality control and made mandatory for all upper secondary VET programmes. Only VET programmes capable of attracting work placements should be provided, linking the provision of VET skills to labour market requirements more closely.
6. Develop an apprenticeship system to complement school-based VET jointly between the government and the social partners and take full account of international experience.

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, Sweden](#) (OECD, 2008) was released in April 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