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Vocational Guidance Education in Full-Time Compulsory Education in Europe

European Commission

VOCATIONAL GUIDANCE EDUCATION IN FULL-TIME COMPULSORY EDUCATION

FINLAND

School year 2007/08

Education is compulsory for pupils between the ages of 7 and 16. It is organised as a single structure, i.e. without a transition between primary and lower secondary levels, with common general training for everyone. From the 7th year of compulsory education, there is a combination of compulsory subjects and optional subjects, with periods of initiation to professional life but without guidance and therefore without separate pathways. Each municipality is free to decide on the options it offers and on their inclusion in the curriculum within the framework of the legislation. A tenth year of general education may be organised by municipalities as they wish: it is open to pupils on a voluntary basis (3 % enrol in this year). The objective is to reinforce skills when the student feels at risk or is undecided. The subjects that are studied are the same as in basic education and it is possible to improve grades. In addition there is preparatory training for working life and periods of work experience.

At the end of compulsory education, there is no national examination. Access to upper secondary vocational education therefore depends on pupils' success in basic compulsory education or in equivalent studies abroad. The municipalities or the schools themselves decide on their admission criteria and possible entrance tests. Post-compulsory upper secondary education divided into general education and vocational training is organised by the same institutions.

LEGAL FRAMEWORK AND NATIONAL OBJECTIVES

The Basic Education Act 628/1998 stipulates that each child must receive appropriate counselling. Educational and vocational guidance ensures, among others, that all students receive all useful information on an educational pathway before and during their education, as well as practical information on future professional life and employment possibilities: students must be informed of possibilities for studies and employment abroad and must receive the necessary assistance in the case of educational or personal difficulties. The objective is also to give them the possibility to learn to find information on the internet on training possibilities and professions and to take decisions and make study and career plans in an evolving context.

The Development Plan for Education and Research 2007-2012 outlines the following as priority issues in guidance: the prevention of social exclusion, the improvement of the efficiency of the educational system and the passing rate at all educational levels, as well as the reduction in the drop-out rates. In order to reduce drop-out rates, guidance counselling is to be developed, as well as training-related communications and counselling, student selections, study grants, individualisation of studies, study monitoring systems, cooperation between home and school, and the school and student healthcare. Flexible operations in

basic education and preparatory vocational basic education are to be made an established practice.

Student healthcare and support and guidance services will be secured for all children and young people who need them throughout the country in a manner required by legislation. Furthermore, the creation of connections between working life and basic education will be advanced and the utilisation of workplaces as learning environments will be increased.

RESPONSIBILITIES

The education and labour administrations are the two main authorities responsible for information and educational and vocational guidance services. They cooperate at national (ministries, the Finnish National Board of Education and the Employment Office) as well as local level. The conditions for this cooperation are defined jointly by the schools (responsible for guidance provided to pupils) and the local employment agencies (mainly responsible for people who have left the education system). Guidance and educational support for studies, careers and employment is provided for by the law. The time devoted to guidance is determined by the government.

Each role and the organisation of guidance must be distributed in the plan established by the local programme (local authority). The offer therefore varies and little centralised information is available on the way in which guidance is organised in each case. The local plan must define the cooperation with the local labour market.

VOCATIONAL GUIDANCE EDUCATION IN THE CURRICULUM

During the first years of basic education (primary level), vocational guidance education is integrated in the process of education. Its objective is to prepare children for the different phases of education and to teach them about the basic functioning of society and the professional world. In the upper years of basic education (lower secondary level), the curriculum includes a separate subject (Finnish: *oppilaanohjaus*, Swedish: *elevhandledning*). It is compulsory from the 7th to the 9th year included. Two weekly lessons per year are devoted to it from the 7th to the 9th year (one weekly lesson per year during the 10th year, which is optional). The local authorities or school may decide how to allocate the lessons to different forms.

Traineeships within the framework of the curriculum

Periods of work experience are organised during basic education. Their objective is to familiarise pupils with the professional world. During the 8th and the 9th years pupils spend one to two weeks in working life. During the 10th year of *perusopetus* (Finnish) or *grundläddande utbildning* (Swedish) (optional) pupils may establish their personal study plan including traineeships of a few days per week.

OTHER TYPES OF ACTIVITY/GUIDANCE SERVICES

Contacts with the professional world

The local authorities and school determine the contacts with the professional world, and practices vary from one school to another.

Guidance services at school

Counselling services as well as the activities related to guidance are organised continuously throughout the duration of basic education. The municipalities are expected to establish a global plan specifying the conditions according to which guidance activities are made available to everyone in the regular school system, as well as indicating the attributions of each stakeholder intervening in the different sectors and professions. This plan must describe the content and method of implementation of the vocational guidance education programme which is provided in classes as well as in individual or group counselling sessions.

The guidance counsellors (Finnish: *opinto-ohjaaja*, Swedish: *elevhandledare*) are recruited by the school and are members of the teaching staff. *Opinto-ohjaaja/elevhandledare* provide educational guidance counselling collectively and individually in secondary schools.

Teachers participate in guidance work with the counsellors. Each class has a tutor (*Luokanvalvoja* in Finnish or *klassföreståndare* in Swedish) – namely a teacher nominated for each class – who supports the students in their class in general school attendance issues (selection of optional subjects, organizing periods of work experience, etc.).

Pupils are guaranteed to receive guidance counselling during their studies and the final cycles of their educational pathway (in the last 3 years, a minimum of two weekly guidance lessons per year of at least 45 minutes). Teachers guide pupils in their studies and anticipate problems related to learning. Pupils and their parents must receive all the information on the schoolwork and acquired knowledge of the pupil, the possible choices and their implications for the future. Everyone – parents, children, teachers and educational counsellors – must discuss the pupil's guidance. The decision regarding future education or professional sector is ultimately that of the pupil and his or her parents.

School psychologists provide social assistance and deal with behavioural and learning problems.

Guidance services outside school

The guidance and counselling services of the employment offices complement school-based services. The psychologists, educational advisers and employment consultants employed by the employment offices of the Ministry of Employment and the Economy offer advice to anyone in need of assistance in terms of career choice. These services are aimed at adults on the labour market as well as young people in general or vocational school. Information services for educational and vocational choices provide the possibility to have a face-to-face discussion with a counsellor about issues dealing with professional development and studies in particular. The Employment Offices also provide various freely available online and printed materials about education and professions.

QUALIFICATIONS OF GUIDANCE STAFF

In the schools

There is no regulation about training teachers to provide vocational guidance education. This varies from one institution and study programme to another (HE institutions are autonomous in deciding the content).

Guidance counsellors in basic (and secondary) education must be qualified teachers with a master's degree (300 ECTS and 5 years) in education with specialist training in guidance and counselling. They perform their function on a full-time basis. The degrees they must have are stipulated in the national legislation and may be obtained at the end of theoretical studies as well as practical professional training. Two Finnish universities offer more advanced training at doctoral level.

In other guidance services

The psychologists in the employment offices of the Ministry of Labour have a master's degree in psychology and take short training sessions during their employment.

COOPERATION BETWEEN SCHOOLS, EMPLOYERS, PARENTS AND OTHER STAKEHOLDERS

Student exchanges and collaborations between schools and local communities are encouraged in the national curriculum. Visits by representatives of the labour market to schools, visits to workplaces, and the use of different sector-based information are the main part of this cooperation. Cooperation between home and school exists from the beginning of compulsory schooling. It evolves in its operational methods according to the age and progress of the pupil and the moments of transition. During the final stage of basic education, parents must have the occasion to discuss possible problems and any issues related to the continuation of the pupil's schooling. If necessary, parents must have the possibility to analyse these problems with their child's guidance counsellor and school psychologist.

ACCESS TO INFORMATION ON VOCATIONAL GUIDANCE

Each year, the Finnish National Board of Education publishes manuals on the vocational training offers for upper secondary education and higher education. It also manages online services (www.edu.fi) and Education Net (*Koulutusnetti* http://www.koulutusnetti.fi/) and is a source of information for students who make educational applications via the joint application system.

The labour administration (ministry and local services) updates databases and information services. The website of the Employment Office of the Ministry of Employment and the Economy (www.mol.fi) offers information on employment and training possibilities. It provides similar services to people in search of training.

Internet references

Employment Office under the Ministry of Employment and the Economy www.mol.fi/mol/en

Koulutusnetti http://www.koulutusnetti.fi/?file=315

Sources

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2. ETV and Cedefop thematic analysis 'Guidance and counselling for learning, career and employment' on www.trainingvillage.gr/etv/Information_ressources/NationalVet/Thematic
3. Eurybase; Eurydice.
4. Career Guidance and Public Policy. Bridging the gap. OECD 2004.