

# **FINLAND**

## **Summary**

**Country Report on the Vocational Education and  
Training system, REFERNET Cedefop**

**and**

**Summary report on Vocational Education and  
Training (VET) for learners with Special  
Educational Needs (SEN)**



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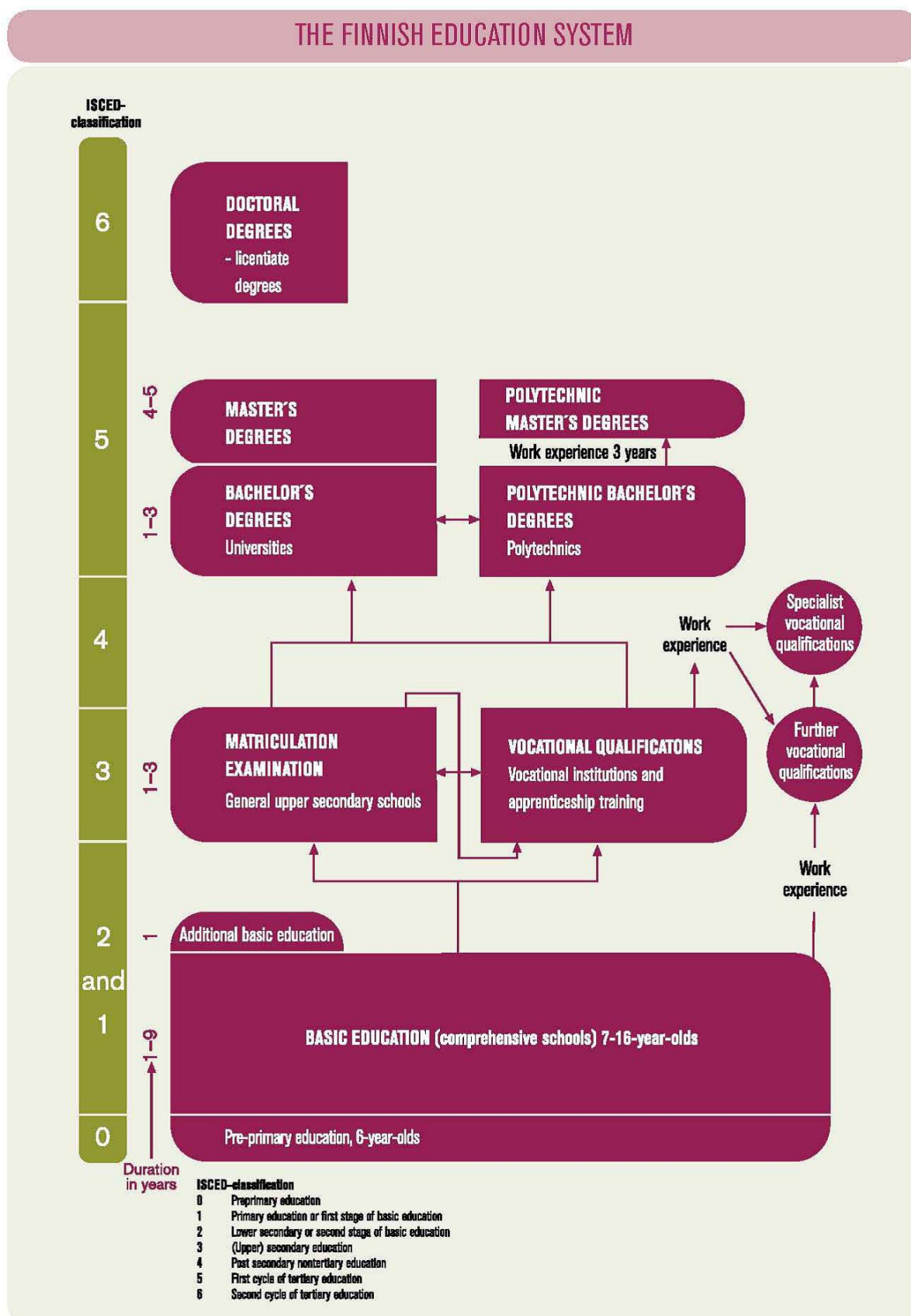
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# 1 VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING SYSTEM

## 1.1 Diagram of the education and training system





## 1.2 Definitions

### **VOCATIONAL EDUCATION - *AMMATILLINEN KOULUTUS; YRKESUTBILDNING*;**

Principally designed to lead participants to acquire the practical skills, know-how and understanding necessary for employment in a particular occupation or trade or class of occupations or trades. Successful completion of such programmes leads to a labour-market relevant vocational qualification recognized by the competent authorities in the country in which it is obtained (e.g. the Ministry of Education, employers' associations, etc.). Vocational education refers to school-based vocational upper secondary education and training provided by VET institutions and adult education centres as well as apprenticeship training and competence-based qualifications. Technical education is a synonym to vocational education.

- a) **Initial Vocational Education And Training - *Ammatillinen Peruskoulutus; Grundläggande Yrkesutbildning*;** Initial vocational education and training (IVET) is defined as training undertaken typically after full-time compulsory education (although it may start before) to promote the acquisition of the necessary knowledge, skills and competences for entry to an occupation or group of occupations. It can be undertaken purely within a school-based and/or work based environment. Initial vocational education and training also encompasses adult education. It also includes apprenticeship training.
- b) Students in **Vocational upper secondary education** and training are mainly aged 16-25 years. The school-based education system means full-time studies for three years at a vocational institution. There are altogether 52 vocational upper secondary qualifications and 119 study programmes in them. In 2006, the 65% of students in ISCED 3 educational level where studying vocational education and only follow the 35% followed the general upper secondary education.
- c) **School-Based Programmes - *Koulumuotoinen Koulutus; Skolbaserad Utbildning*;** In school-based programmes instruction takes place (either partly or exclusively) in educational institutions. These include special training centres for vocational education run by public or private authorities or enterprise-based special training centres if these qualify as educational institutions. These programmes can have an on-the-job training component, i.e. a component of some practical experience at the workplace.
- d) **Apprenticeship Training - *Oppisopimuskoulutus; Läroavtalsutbildning*;** Systematic, long-term training alternating periods in a school or training centre and at the workplace; the apprentice is contractually linked to the employer and receives remuneration (wage or allowance). Apprentices must be at least 15 years of age at the time of signing the contract and have completed the basic education syllabus or equivalent. The employer assumes responsibility for providing the trainee with training leading to a specific occupation. In apprenticeship training, the employer pays the student a wage for the apprenticeship period. The pay varies in different fields, but is usually approximately 80% of the wages of a skilled worker in that particular field.

## 1.3 Objectives and priorities of the national policy development areas of VET

The implementation of the Development Plan for Education and Research takes places during 2007–2012, which is based on the objectives set for education and science policy in the Government Programme. Implementation of the plan will be evaluated in 2010.



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### 1.3.1 Main goals related to IVET

Priorities for development include guaranteeing equal opportunities for education and training, high quality of education and training and availability of skilled labour, developing higher education and safeguarding competent teaching resources. A specific priority will be to enhance the quality of basic and higher education. The matching of initial vocational qualifications with the world of work will be improved, so that they produce the field-specific vocational competence required by working life and broad vocational skills and competence for further studies. The flexibility of the vocational qualifications system will be increased by diversifying the possibilities to include modules of other vocational qualifications in initial vocational qualifications. Measures will be taken to ensure that increased optionality will not reduce the vocational competence produced by the qualifications. Teachers' continuing education will be made more systematic and regional cooperation in continuing education will be promoted.

### 1.4 Institutional and legislative framework for IVET

Education policy is defined by Parliament and the Government. In addition to educational legislation, these policy definitions are specified in various development documents and in the state budget. A central development document in the educational sector is the 'Development Plan for Education within the Administrative Field of the Ministry of Education and University Research' (*KESU*). The last plan was the 2007-11. The local authorities (municipalities, altogether 348) are responsible for organising basic education at a local level, and are partly responsible for financing it as well. The Government decides on the general goals of vocational education and training, the structure of qualifications, and the core subjects. The Ministry of Education decides on the studies and their scope. The local authorities (municipalities, altogether 348) are responsible for organising basic education at a local level, and are partly responsible for financing it as well.

**Policies:** Reform in legislation from 1999, increasing the independent decision-making powers of the local authorities, other education providers and schools. Apprenticeship training and vocational upper secondary education and training is governed by the Vocational Education Act (630/1998) and Decree on Vocational Education (811/1998). The Act concerns initial vocational education for both young and adult students and the available qualifications. A special Act on the Financing of the Provision of Education and Culture (635/ 1998) covers all funding for all levels of education except universities.

### 1.5 Types of teacher and trainer occupations in VET

In Finland there is a clear distinction between teachers and trainers. Teacher required a qualification defined by law instead the trainers in apprenticeship training and workplace instructors in IVET their qualifications are not regulated. Their working contexts also differ. Thus teachers work in VET institutions while trainers and workplace instructors work in enterprises. Trainers supervise students during their on-the-job learning periods or apprenticeship training in enterprises. They are generally experienced foremen and skilled workers. They frequently have a vocational or professional qualification, but hold no pedagogical qualifications.

### 1.6 Systems and mechanisms for the anticipation of skill needs

Quantitative skills anticipation information is provided by the Finnish National Board of Education (used by the preparation of the current development plan for 2007-2012) and Labour Force 2025 project coordinated by the Ministry of Labour. The central governmental bodies for skills anticipation are training committees and the Advisory Board for Educational Cooperation.



## **1.7 Practices to match VET provision with skill needs**

The national core curricula comprise a legal norm for educational institutions and apply to all upper secondary vocational education providers for competence-based qualifications for young and adult students. The Finnish National Board of Education approves the qualification-specific core curricula and the requirements of each competence-based qualification. They are drawn up in cooperation with social partners in different fields, other representatives and experts of economic life as well as teachers and students.

## **1.8 Guidance and counselling for learning, career and employment**

The policies regarding guidance and counselling, are influenced and steered by evaluations, research and indicators etc. In VET, all qualifications include at least 1.5 credits of guidance counselling. In addition, each student has the right to receive sufficient personal and other necessary educational guidance as part of their studies. Guidance counsellors must have a VET teacher qualification plus at least 1 year of teaching experience before their specialisation.

## **1.9 Funding for initial vocational education and training**

The Ministry of Education has the overall responsibility for funding education and training except for labour market training which is the responsibility of the Ministry of Employment and the Economy. The majority of vocational institutions (usually VET institutions) are maintained by local authorities and joint municipal boards. Of all students in VET 16 per cent study in privately maintained institutions. Funding criteria are uniform irrespective of ownership. In the apprenticeship system, the state is responsible for fully covering funding: the *statutory government transfer* accounts for 100 per cent of the unit cost confirmed by the Ministry of Education.

## **1.10 References**

Koukku, Aapo., Kyrö, Matti and Volmari, Kristiina (2009): VET in Europe. Country Report Finland. Report within the Framework of ReferNet. Cedefop.





## **2 VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING (VET) FOR LEARNERS WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS (SEN)**

### **2.1 Population**

Vocational education is governed by the Vocational Education and Training Act (630/1998), the Vocational Education and Training Decree (811/1998), the Education and Research 2007-2012 Development Plan and the National core curricula provided by the Finnish National Board of Education (FNBE).

In Finland, the basic right to education and culture can be found in the Finnish Constitution (11.6.1999/731). There is consensus in Finland on the need for the training guarantee as part of the Youth Society Guarantee. The training guarantee means that each young person who completes comprehensive school, including those with severe disabilities, should have the opportunity to enter further education. The Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture (OKM) has set itself the target that no less than 96% of young people who complete basic education should continue on to further education or receive supplemental education during the same year.

Students have special educational needs (SEN) when their possibilities for learning and employment are decreased due to disability, sickness, delayed development, emotional disturbance or other reason. Students with SEN have the right to special needs education, student welfare services and educational guidance. Students with minor or short-term learning or adjustment difficulties have the right to remedial teaching or to receive part-time special needs education in conjunction with mainstream instruction.

Special needs education and training (VET SEN) is integrated into mainstream vocational education and training (mainstream VET) as far as possible. If a student cannot cope in mainstream VET due to disability, illness, delayed development, emotional disorder or some other similar special need, he or she may be admitted to VET SEN. An individual education plan (IEP) is drawn up for every student with SEN. The basis for the IEP can be found in the Vocational Education Act 630/1998 and Decree 811/1998.

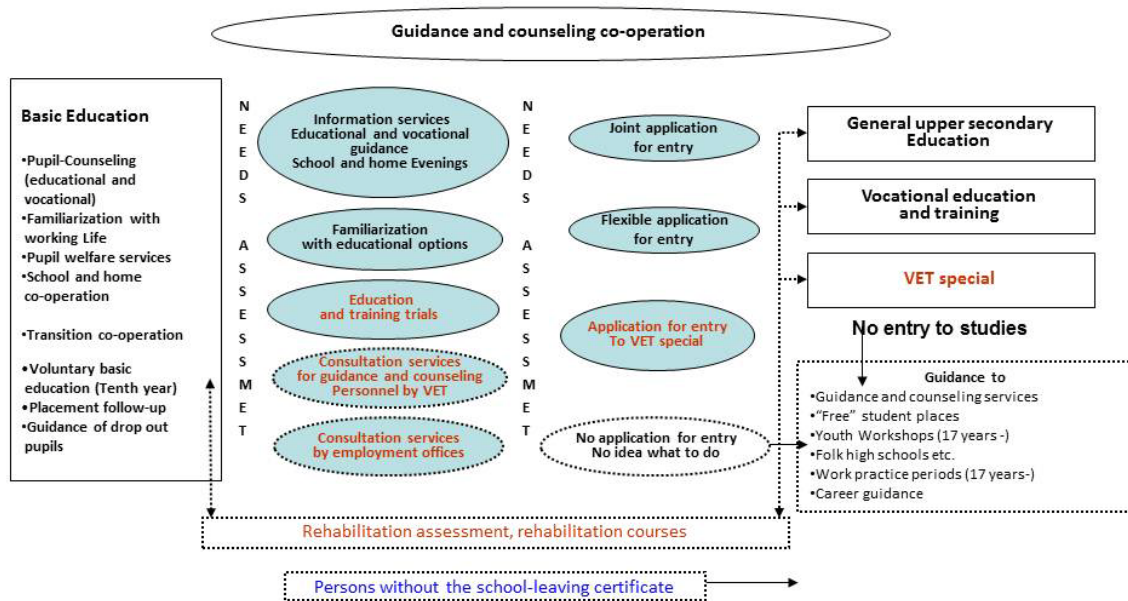
### **2.2 Organisation and Provision of Vet programmes**

*2.2.1 IVET system options for SEN learners: lower and upper secondary levels, apprenticeship training and other youth programmes.*

In Finland, the basic right to education and culture can be found in the Finnish Constitution. Public authorities must secure equal opportunities for every citizen of Finland in terms of accessing education following compulsory education. Every young person, including people with a severe disability, has the right to secondary education. Guidance counsellors aim to find a suitable place for each student according to the student's abilities and wishes.



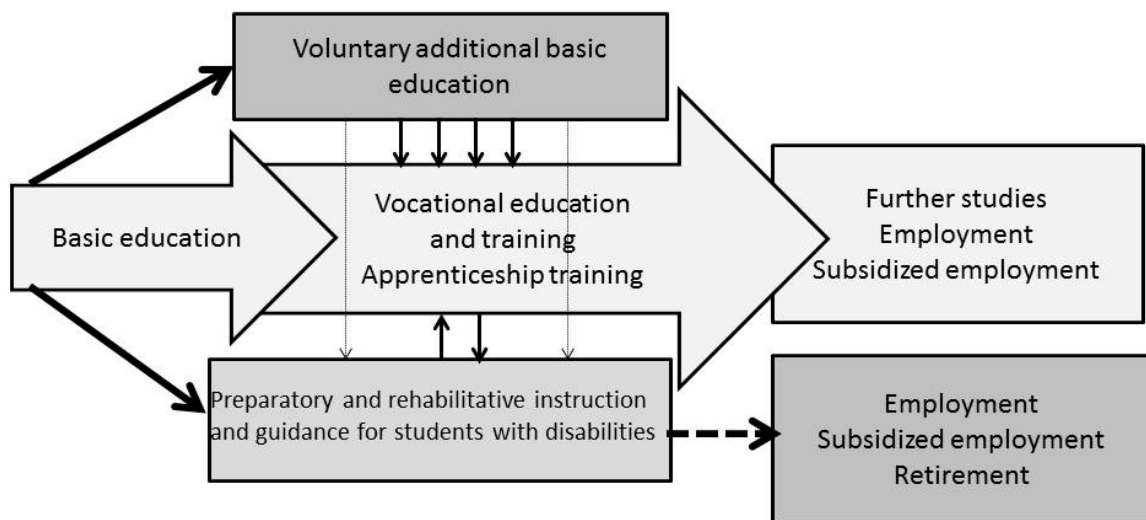
## From Basic Education to Upper Secondary Education



Originally made in Luovi's UraMatkaaja and Oulu Vocational College's URA PLUS projects

**Figure 1. The transition from basic education to upper secondary education.**

Students are free to apply for the vocational programme of their choice anywhere in the country. SEN vocational education and training (VET) is integrated into mainstream VET institutions as far as possible. Besides this, students with SEN have the option of a voluntary additional year of basic education and they are free to apply for preparatory and rehabilitative instruction and guidance for students with disabilities (mainly arranged by VET SEN providers).



**Figure 2. Opportunities for students with SEN after basic education.**

**Voluntary additional basic education** is aimed at those young people who

- have completed comprehensive school and are in danger of dropping out



- have not yet made a decision about their career choice
- want to improve their study skills
- need to expand their knowledge base
- have been left without a place in further education.

The aim of voluntary additional basic education is to improve the student's capacity to obtain a place in vocational upper secondary education and training by improving his/her capacity for studying and building the knowledge base required for these studies.

**Preparatory and rehabilitative instruction and guidance for students with disabilities** is suitable for a young person with SEN who requires special support in his/her studies because of disability, illness or for another reason. The scope of the instruction is determined by the student's individual goals and needs. The rehabilitative instruction and guidance aimed at vocational upper secondary education and training (IVET) usually amounts to 20-40 credits. The instruction and guidance that prepares young people for working and independent living is 40-120 credits. The instruction builds a young person's capacity for vocational upper secondary education and training, working and independent living, and provides help in clarifying future plans.

**Vocational education and training (IVET)** is based on the basic education syllabus. The upper secondary level vocational education and training that follows basic education lasts 3 years (120 credits). Even though the education and training mostly takes place in institutions, all qualifications include at least 20 credits (approx. six months) of instruction at the workplace (on-the-job training). Vocational education may also be completed as apprenticeship training, which also includes courses arranged in the institutions.

**Table 1. Students with SEN in voluntary additional basic education and VET in 2010.**

	Mainstream schools	Special group/ special schools	Total
<b>Voluntary additional basic education</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>256</b>	<b>303</b>
<b>Preparatory and rehabilitative instruction and guidance</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2 903</b>	<b>2 903</b>
- Special education as special task of the education provider	0	2 274	2 274
- Other education providers	0	629	629
<b>Vocational education and training (VET)</b>	<b>13 749*</b>	<b>3 699</b>	<b>17 448</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>13 796</b>	<b>6 858</b>	<b>20 654</b>

\*Apprenticeship training is included to vocational education and training (VET)

Source of data: 1) National Board of Education, Wera Web reporting-service, 2) National Board of Education, Financing and Administration, 3) Ministry of Education and Culture.

The number of students with SEN, as well as their opportunities in secondary education, has increased over the last decade but these students are still at risk of only attaining a low level of education.

### 2.2.2 Different types of educational/VET settings

In Finland, students with SEN are integrated in the mainstream VET system wherever possible, or they attend special needs groups, or they participate in both. VET SNE can also be provided through apprenticeship training. VET SEN institutions are responsible for providing education for students with the most severe disabilities and need for support. In



the case of students with severe disabilities, special VET institutions and some mainstream VET institutions provide training and rehabilitative instruction and guidance.

- a) Mainstream VET institutions; 13747 students
- b) Specialised VET units within the mainstream VET; 1759 students
- c) Specialised VET institutions addressed to students with SEN; 1942 students
- d) Preparatory and rehabilitative instruction and guidance for students with disabilities; 1088 students within mainstream VET institutions and 1772 students in VET special institutions. Apprenticeship training; 9 students.

Most mainstream VET institutions are maintained by local authorities or joint municipal boards (consortia of municipalities). Nowadays, all special VET institutions are private, but they are under public supervision; they follow the national core curricula and qualification guidelines decided upon by the Finnish National Board of Education. They also receive the same level of public funding as publicly funded schools.

### *2.2.3 The curricula of VET programmes, the assessment procedures, types of qualifications and assessment criteria (e.g. flexibility on curricula composition and individual adaptations, diplomas etc.)*

In Finland, VET has been grouped into education sectors, which are further divided into fields of study and then into qualifications and study programmes. The education sectors are as follows: humanities and education, culture, social sciences, business and administration, natural sciences, technology and transportation, natural resources and environment, social and health care services and physical education, and tourism, catering and domestic services. There are 53 vocational upper secondary qualifications and 119 study programmes within the education sectors. The programmes provide comprehensive basic skills relating to that sector as well as more specialised skills for one particular field.

Students with SEN are free to apply for the vocational programme of their choice anywhere in the country. Special VET institutions and some mainstream VET institutions provide training and rehabilitative instruction and guidance for students with severe disabilities. Guidance counsellors aim to find a suitable place for each student according to the student's abilities and wishes. Students in need of special support may apply to mainstream VET institutions within the national joint application system or through the related flexible application procedure. They may also apply to special VET institutions directly.

The VET curriculum system consists of the national core curricula, each education provider's locally approved curricula and the students' personal study plans. The Finnish National Board of Education (OPH) decides on the national core curriculum for each vocational qualification as well as the training and rehabilitative instruction and guidance for students with disabilities, determining the composition of studies and objectives, core contents and assessment criteria for study modules. The Board also includes provisions on student assessment, guidance counselling, on-the-job learning, special education and training, educational arrangements for immigrants and apprenticeship training. The content of local curricula is defined in the national core curriculum as well.

The first alternative to providing special VET is to include students with SEN in mainstream VET. Only when this is not feasible is the second alternative considered: the provision of special needs education and training in a special group or institution. The objective of VET SNE is to help and support students in such a way as to give them equal opportunities to complete their studies in accordance with their abilities. It is the task of each education provider to determine how to define which students are in need of special



VET and to draw up individual education plans (IEP) for them. Special VET may deviate from the general provisions governing VET as determined in the relevant national core curriculum. The duration of studies and study arrangements may be adjusted where a student's health or previous studies dictate accordingly.

An IEP has to be drawn up for each student receiving special VET. This plan must set out details of the qualification to be completed, the national core curriculum or the requirements of the competence-based qualification observed in VET, the scope of the qualification, the individual curriculum drawn up for the student, grounds for providing special VET, the SNE and student welfare services required for studying, as well as other services and support measures provided for the student.

The starting point of drawing up IEP is to assess each student's strengths and his or her SEN. The objectives and content for students with SEN are, as far as possible, the same as for other students. Students' learning and competences are always assessed in terms of the vocational skills requirements and assessment criteria determined within the relevant National Core Curriculum. The objectives may, however, be adjusted in VET. To avoid study overlaps, previous studies or work experience may be taken into account and recognised (accredited). Studies at the general upper secondary school may be taken into account in the core subjects, other elective studies and free-choice studies. The vocational institution must compare how the previous studies or work experience correspond with the curriculum in terms of objectives and core content. The student must provide a certificate showing their assessed grade and, in the event that assessment was not possible, the student must pass a test.

Students' learning in VET is assessed by giving verbal or written feedback on their study progress. The assessment is conducted by the teachers and, for the on-the-job learning periods, by the representatives of the company as well. At the end of each study module, the student's skills and knowledge are compared with the objectives and assessment criteria of the education provider's curriculum, which is based on the national core curriculum. The objectives and assessment criteria of the free-choice studies and those of some elective studies are drawn up locally. Free-choice studies may, with the consent of the student, be given a pass mark without an indication of the grade. Generally the assessment is based on observations, different types of theoretical and work examinations, portfolios, student self- and group-assessment etc.

The certification and the content of the qualification are regulated by the Vocational Education and Training Act 630/1998 and Vocational Education and Training Decree 811/1998, as well as the national core curricula and other provisions of the Finnish National Board of Education. A new type of assessment called 'skills demonstration' was added to the certification in the school based education system as of August 2006. The students have to pass a skills demonstration in every vocational module in order to be certified. The test is organised in cooperation with local work places and assessed together by teachers and representatives of the work places.

A new Decree 488/2008 was adopted in August 2008 and has been in force since August 2009. According to the new Decree, acceptable performances are graded on the scale of excellent (3), good (2) and satisfactory (1). In the school-based system the qualification certificates are awarded by the VET provider. A qualification certificate for the vocational qualification is awarded upon completion of all compulsory, elective and free-choice study modules (a total of 120 credits) included in the student's personal study plans. Students with SEN get a qualification certificate and certificate of skills demonstration even if one or more objectives have been adjusted. If a student does not pass every vocational module included in the study programme or that he or she has





studied in preparatory and rehabilitative instruction and guidance, he or she receives a transcript.

## **2.3 VET programmes and employment**

### *2.3.1 Strategies and practices used to match the local labour market needs with the skills acquired by learners in the course of the VET programmes*

VET provides students with the knowledge and skills necessary to acquire vocational skills and with the potential for self-employment by

- Strengthening work-based learning
- Raising completion rates and post-qualification employment
- Promoting innovation, regional development and entrepreneurship
- Ensuring competence as part of quality strategies
- Responding and anticipating to changes in the world of work and the labour market rapidly and flexibly.

### **Cooperation with 'Working life'**

- colleges and workplaces are cooperating more and more
- on-the-job learning and skills demonstration is incorporated into school-based studies
- planning of curricula and training and assessing and forecasting future needs is carried out together with workplaces
- 33 advisory boards for vocational education and training (NBE)
- the schools have branch-specific advisory committees

The national core curricula are drawn up by the Finnish National Board of Education (OPH) in co-operation with employers' organisations, trade unions, the Trade Union of Education (OAJ) and student unions. They are dealt with by National Education and Training Committees, which are tripartite bodies established for each occupational field by the Ministry of Education and Culture (OKM) for recurrent terms of three years. They plan and develop vocational education and training. Local tripartite bodies, as well as other representatives of working life, take part in the curriculum work as advisers and consultants. VET providers' curricula are approved by the boards of VET providers.

The 1998 legislative amendments introduced on-the-job learning and prioritised 'learning by doing' within the sphere of vocational education and training. These changes promoted the provision of special VET, as special education has traditionally intensified learning by emphasising practical skills and activities. Every study programme in VET includes at least six months (20 credits) of on-the-job learning. On-the-job learning is carried out at the workplace with focused and supervised study based on the curriculum. Students are usually not paid during on-the-job learning. Students with SEN can also carry out an 'on-the-job' period inside a VET institution.

Skills demonstration has been incorporated into all VET qualifications since 2006, as a way of both improving and ensuring the quality of training. In skills demonstration, students show how well they have achieved the objectives of the vocational studies and acquired the vocational skills required in working life. Skills demonstrations run throughout the entire period of education and training and are planned, implemented, organised and assessed in cooperation with workplaces at actual workplaces in realistic work-like situations. The integration of demonstrations into on-the-job learning has promoted



achievement of this goal. Vocational skills demonstrations have also increased teachers' knowledge of the world of work.

## 2.4 Data (relating to learners with SEN aged between 14 and 25 years old and enrolled in VET programmes in the academic year 2010/2011 and relating to their transition to employment)

### 2.4.1 Data on the number of learners with SEN aged between 14 and 25 years old who are enrolled in VET programmes, at national and/or local level

Students are free to apply for the vocational programme of their choice, at least in principle. In reality, there is not an even distribution of students with SEN across all sectors of VET. The number of students with SEN is highest in the technology, communication and transport sector and the tourism, catering and domestic services sector. In contrast, there are only a few students with SEN in the social and health care services and sport sector and in the humanities and education sector.

**Table 2. Students with SEN by sector of education in relation to all students in 2010.**

	Students with SEN				All students	Students with SEN %
	Special vocational institution	Mainstream educational settings	Apprenticeship training	Total		
Humanities and education	0	213	0	213	3798	5,6
Culture	158	696	0	854	11474	7,4
Social science, business and administration	295	1097	0	1392	22731	6,1
Natural sciences	105	414	0	519	6504	8
Technology, communication and transport	849	7854	3	8706	78119	11,1
Natural resources and the environment	130	925	0	1055	10362	10,2
Social services, health and sport	29	1312	1	1342	39668	3,4
Tourism, catering and domestic services	376	2995	5	3376	19820	17
Total	1942	15506	9	17457	192476	9,1

Source of data: National Board of Education, Wera Web reporting-service.

### 2.4.2 Data on how many of these learners are enrolled in mainstream VET programmes, how many are enrolled in special units within mainstream VET settings and how many are enrolled in special VET programmes

VET is provided in the form of special education for students who need special educational, student welfare and employment access services due to disability, illness, delayed development, emotional disorder or for another similar reason. Each VET provider is responsible for organising special education and training and services for students with an identified special education and training status. Students with SEN have a right to special needs education and student welfare services and educational and vocational guidance. Students with minor or short-term learning or adjustment difficulties have the right to remedial teaching or to receive part-time special needs education in conjunction with mainstream instruction.

The first alternative to providing special VET is to include students with SEN in mainstream VET institutions. Only when this is not feasible is the second alternative considered: the provision of special needs education in a special group or in a special VET institution. In Finland most students with SEN are integrated into mainstream VET. Special VET institutions, in turn, are responsible for providing education and training to students with the most severe disabilities or those who most need the support services provided in special VET.



**Table 3. Students with SEN in VET by place of special education provision in 2010.**

	Mainstream VET institutions	Special VET institution	Apprenticeship training	Total
In special group	1759	1940		3699
In general education group	13747	2		13749
Other			9	9
Total	15506	1942	9	17457

Source of data: National Board of Education, Wera Web reporting-service.

*2.4.3 Data on the number and percentage of learners with SEN aged between 14 and 25 who are enrolled in VET programmes, in comparison with the number and percentage of the general youth population of the same age enrolled in VET programmes, at national and/or local level*

In 2010 about nine per cent of students in VET had some form of SEN. The number and percentage of students with SEN varies by region. The percentage of the students with SEN was higher than the average in Kanta-Häme, Keski-Pohjanmaa, Etelä-Karjala and Satakunta and below the average in Lappi, Keski-Suomi and Etelä-Savo.

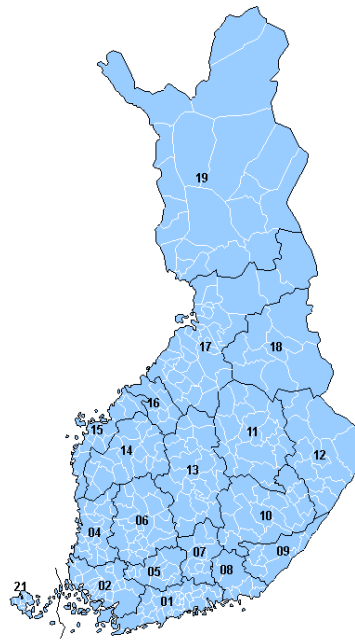
**Table 4. Students with SEN by region, in relation to all students, in 2010.**

	Students with SEN				All students	Students with SEN %
	Special VET institution	Mainstream VET institutions	Apprenticeship training	Total		
01 Uusimaa	600	3 172	0	3772	46 987	8
02 Varsinais-Suomi	178	1 146	0	1324	15349	8,6
04 Satakunta	15	957	0	972	8587	11,3
05 Kanta-Häme	282	582	0	864	6952	12,4
06 Pirkanmaa	77	1409	0	1486	16513	9
07 Päijät-Häme	6	711	0	717	7898	9,1
08 Kymenlaakso	0	582	0	582	5971	9,7
09 Etelä-Karjala	0	436	0	436	3760	11,6
10 Etelä-Savo	1	414	0	415	5798	7,2
11 Pohjois-Savo	0	923	0	923	9136	10,1
12 Pohjois-Karjala	135	638	0	773	7054	10,9
13 Keski-Suomi	75	708	0	783	11014	7,1
14 Etelä-Pohjanmaa	61	719	0	780	9746	8
15 Pohjanmaa	0	651	0	651	5928	11
16 Keski-Pohjanmaa	0	416	0	416	3561	11,7
17 Pohjois-Pohjanmaa	483	1146	0	1629	15857	10,3
18 Kainuu	0	319	0	319	2915	10,9
19 Lappi	29	577	0	606	8583	7,1
21 Ahvenanmaa	0	0	0	0	867	0
No information about region	0	0	9	9	*	*
Total	1942	15 506	9	17457	192 476	9,1

Source of data: National Board of Education, Wera Web reporting –service.



- 01 Uusimaa
- 02 Varsinais-Suomi
- 04 Satakunta
- 05 Kanta-Häme
- 06 Pirkanmaa
- 07 Päijät-Häme
- 08 Kymenlaakso
- 09 Etelä-Karjala
- 10 Etelä-Savo
- 11 Pohjois-Savo
- 12 Pohjois-Karjala
- 13 Keski-Suomi
- 14 Etelä-Pohjanmaa
- 15 Pohjanmaa
- 16 Keski-Pohjanmaa
- 17 Pohjois-Pohjanmaa
- 18 Kainuu
- 19 Lappi
- 21 Ahvenanmaa



**Figure 3. Regions of Finland.**

*2.4.4 Brief definition and explanation of “drop out”. Data concerning the drop out rate of learners with SEN aged between 14 and 25 who are enrolled in VET programmes, in comparison with the drop out rate of the general youth population, at national and/or local level.*

Learners who completely drop out of the education system after comprehensive school constitute a real problem for education and labour policy. In 2008, 9.8 % of students dropped out of mainstream VET in Finland. There were several reasons why students left school:

- Change of study programme
- The content of a study programme does not match the hopes and expectations student have of their future profession
- The study place is not the first choice for the student.

There is no public data available concerning how many of the ‘drop-outs’ had special educational needs. But for example in Luovi Vocational College (the largest special VET provider in Finland) in 2010-2011, 10.7 % of the students dropped out. The percentage of drop-outs was highest in the natural resources and environment sector and in natural sciences in Luovi and all VET institutions. All Luovi’s students are students with special needs who have a variety of reasons for requiring VET SNE.

Students with SEN are at a higher risk of dropping out, especially if they don’t get the special services they need, though the risk remains even when they do receive the required services. (e.g. students with severe mental health problems or severe social problems). Uneducated young people with SEN are at high risk of unemployment. Many of them belong to the “hard core” of the long term unemployed population.

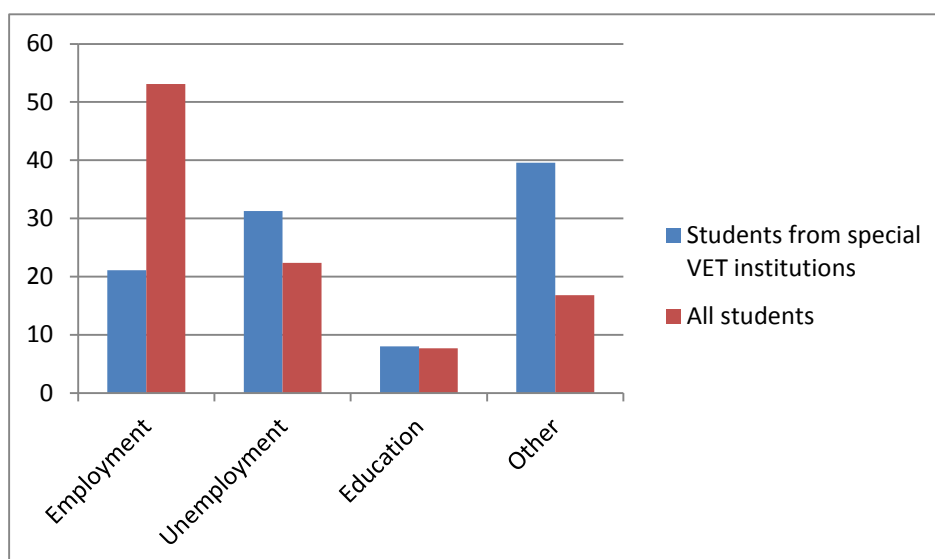
Approximately 58 per cent of all students and 48 per cent of students with SEN complete VET in three years. About 70 per cent of all students and 56 per cent of students with SEN complete VET in four years. The majority of those who did not pass VET in four years had not completed any other degrees either. If they leave without secondary education, they will be at a high risk of unemployment, even considering that the Finnish



government is aiming to ensure that all under 25 year olds find a work placement or work trial (e.g. in a youth workshop or a training placement) no more than 3 months after unemployment. This target requires new labour policy measures as well as intensifying the old ones. The priority is VET-studies if the person has no upper secondary education and training.

#### *2.4.5 Data on the transition rate of learners with SEN from VET to employment in comparison with the transition rate of the general youth population from VET to employment at national and/or local level*

In Finland, the labour market position of young people worsened during the economic recession. It has subsequently improved, but the positive changes didn't cover all jobseekers, for example young people with SEN. The employment rate of people with disabilities or other special needs remains low. The more severe the degree of disability, the lower the participation in the labour force. Particularly at risk are low educated young people with disabilities. Many of them belong to the "hard core" of the long term unemployed population. Disability and early retirement, due particularly to mental health problems, has increased since the late 1990s.



**Figure 4. Placements of students from special VET institutions and all students in 2009.**

Source of data: Statistic Finland.

## **2.5 Legislation and policy**

### *2.5.1 Brief description of existing legislation*

Pursuant to the Finnish Constitution, everyone in Finland has the right (11.6.1999/731), to earn his or her livelihood with the employment, occupation or commercial activity of his or her choice. Further, the public authorities shall take responsibility for the protection of the labour force, promote employment and work towards guaranteeing everyone the right to work. Provisions on the right to receive training that promotes employability are laid down in an Act. No one shall be dismissed from employment without a lawful reason (The Non-Discrimination Act 20.1.2004/21).

In its 2003-2007 programme, the Ministry of Labour and Economy (TEM) introduced the *Youth Society Guarantee* aimed at reducing and preventing youth unemployment. In this inter-sectoral employment programme, the labour authorities have the principal



responsibility for implementing the society guarantee for unemployed young people. The Youth Society Guarantee is composed of labour market measures and programmes for young people. The main aim of the guarantee is that every young unemployed person should be offered a place in further education, practical training, or a workshop activity after a period of three months unemployment. The main target group is young people (< 25 years) who have been unemployed for three months. The society guarantee includes intensified co-operation between education and employment, intensified labour services and cross-sectoral service co-operation. Co-operation and team work are emphasised in implementing the public employment services (PES) to the young unemployed. Career guidance services are an important part of the youth service provision.

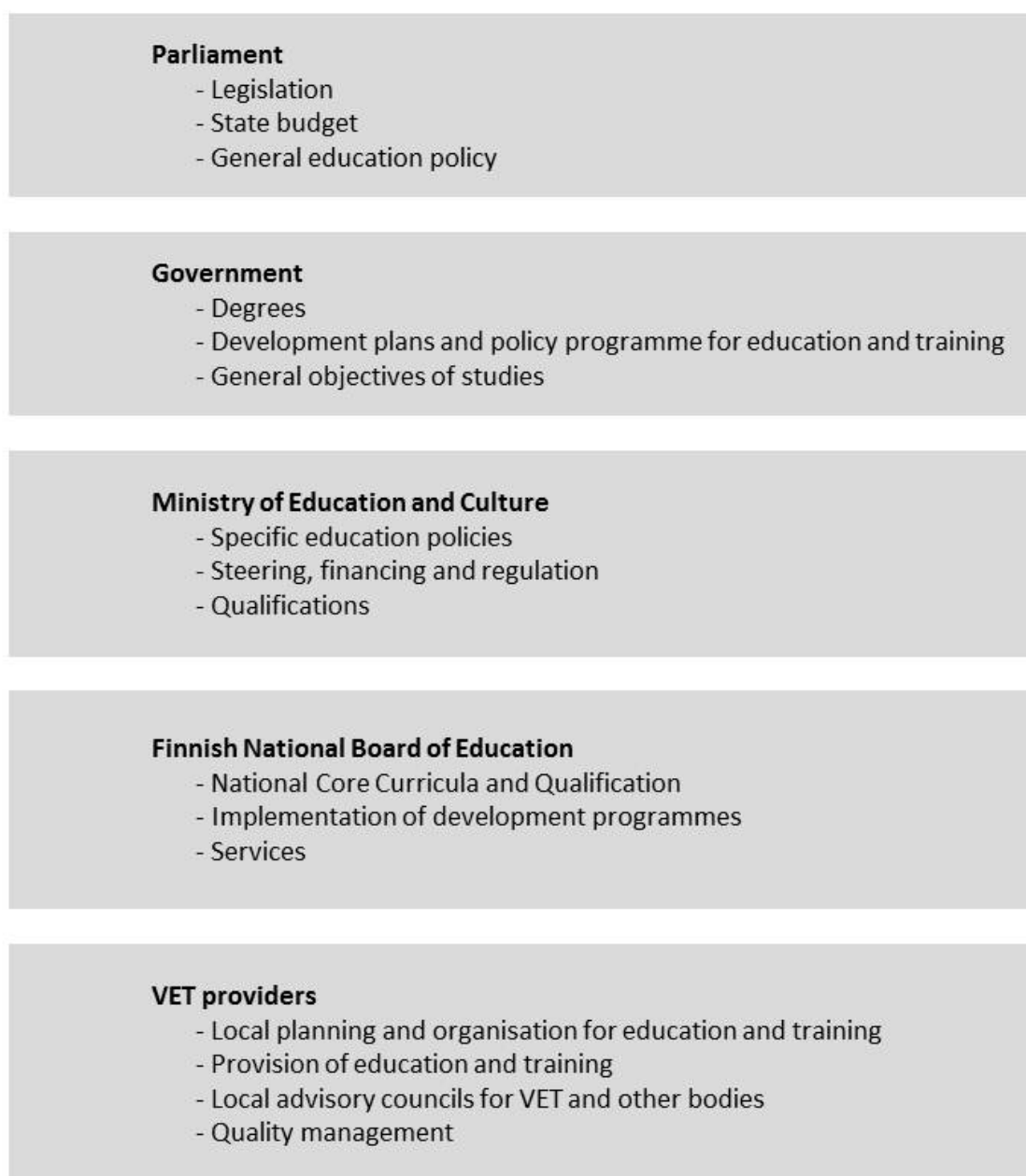
#### *2.5.2 Main objectives and priorities of the national/regional policy relating to VET for learners with SEN and the transition from VET to employment*

Equal access to employment for people with SEN has been broadly accepted as a principle in Finland. Young people with SEN have at their disposal the usual variety of employment services provided to everyone, including, for example, vocational guidance and career planning. These services are provided by the PES or Joint Service Offices and are based on individual needs, at least in principle. Special services and measures are used as necessary, for example pay subsidy, adaptation of working conditions and job coaching. In recent years much attention has been paid to rehabilitation as a means of improving the capacity of people with special needs to work, as well as to overcome their impairment and enter the workplace. The number of rehabilitees who are entering work has increased year upon year. Nevertheless, the employment rate of people with disabilities still remains low. The ethos of welfare is still predominantly based on the idea that people with special needs do not have to work and the welfare state then attempts to compensate this disadvantage with a disability pension. Many people automatically assume that disability completely prevents a person from performing at work and that there is no need to employ a person with a disability because he or she already has disability pension.

The labour market position of young people in general worsened during the economic recession. It has subsequently improved, but the positive changes didn't cover all jobseekers, for example young people with disabilities or health problems. The employment rate of people with disabilities remains low. The trend seems to be that subsidised workplaces have decreased, while vocational training and similar activities have increased. There have been some improvements recently, but many young people with disabilities or other special needs are still outside the labour force. The more severe the degree of disability, the lower the participation in the labour force. Particularly at risk are uneducated young people with special needs. Disability and early retirement, particularly due to mental health problems, has increased since the late 1990s.



### 2.5.3 Roles and responsibilities within the institutional framework



**Figure 5. The roles and responsibilities of Parliament, Government, ministerial bodies, national boards, regional administration and education providers**

Source of data: Finnish National Board of Education and The Ministry of Education and Culture.

**The Parliament** enacts laws on education and decides on the general principles contained in education policy. **The Government** and **the Ministry of Education and Culture** (OKM) implement these principles at the central government level. A central development document in the educational sector is the Development Plan for Education and Research, which the Government approves every four years for the year of its approval and for the following five calendar years. The currently effective development plan for 2011–2016 was approved at the end of 2011.



The Government decides on the general goals of vocational education and training, the structure of qualifications, and the core subjects. The Ministry of Education and Culture (OKM) decides on the type of studies and their scope. The Ministry of Education and Culture is responsible for specifying education policies and for regulating, steering and financing VET. It grants the authority to provide vocational education. This authorisation defines, among other things, the fields of study taught and the total number of students. Within the framework of their authorisation and qualification structure, education providers are free to target their educational provision as they choose to meet the needs of working life, trade and industry.

In matters related to comprehensive and upper secondary schools, vocational institutions and adult education, the Ministry is assisted by an expert agency, namely the **Finnish National Board of Education (FNBE)**. The FNBE

- Is responsible for drawing up the national core curricula for basic and general upper secondary education and the framework for vocational qualifications and competence-based qualifications.
- Evaluates education. It evaluates learning results and improves the efficiency of training.
- Provides information services, co-ordinates information networks and services in the education sector, produces indicator data and information for anticipating educational needs, maintains the financing system for the education sector, and publishes training guides.
- Provides education support services. FNBE maintains a student selection register for upper secondary vocational training and education and polytechnics; organises language examinations; organises and funds further studies for teachers and other teaching staff; is responsible for the recognition of foreign qualifications; and develops and sells learning materials.

The FNBE provides **the national core curriculum** for each vocational qualification, detailing the goals and core content of studies. The national core curricula constitute a legal norm for educational institutions. Their purpose is to reflect the objectives of education policy and determine the requirements for nationally uniform vocational competences as well as the capabilities for learning to learn and function as a citizen. In addition, the core curricula must function as the basis for the evaluation of national learning outcomes. The national core curriculum determines the composition of studies and objectives, core content and assessment criteria for study modules. It also includes provisions on student assessment, guidance counselling, on-the-job learning, special education and training, educational arrangements for immigrants and apprenticeship training. The content of local curricula is defined in the national core curriculum as well.

**VET providers** decide on the provision of vocational education and training in their region within the limits of their authorisation from the Ministry. They decide independently on issues such as the kind of education and training provided and the method of completion of these studies as well as making decisions regarding the organisation of operations and the educational institutions. When planning their operations, VET providers take into consideration the educational needs of the world of work and the population of the region. VET providers prepare their vocational education curricula for the fields where education and training is provided based on the national core curriculum.

**The regional administration** is run by five State Provincial Offices, which also deal with educational matters, notably monitoring education and training and legal protection in the sector. In addition, the State Provincial Offices provide information-based guidance for



schools and local authorities within their regions and evaluate basic services. In Finland, Regional administration implements Government-funded continuing training for teaching staff in their respective regions. In addition, they allocate grants for the purpose of vocational institutions' mission to develop and serve the world of work. They also manage regional ESF funding, which is allocated to purposes such as development of work-based learning.

#### *2.5.4 The actors involved in improving standards and evaluating the VET programmes on offer for learners with SEN, relating to the job market*

The actors are

- The Ministry of Education and Culture (OKM)
- The Finnish National Board of Education (OPH)
- The Finnish Education Evaluation Council
- The Statistics of Finland
- VET providers

The quality management of the Finnish VET system, including VET SNE, is based on the Vocational Education and Training Quality Strategy 2011-2020 and the Quality Management Recommendation for Vocational Education and Training, both of which have been adopted by the Ministry of Education and Culture (OKM).

The mainstream VET providers have a Performance Indicator for IVET follow-up. The indicators are an outcome indicator (consists of the completion of studies and of employment or further studies), a teacher competence indicator, and a staff development indicator. Mainstream VET SEN students are involved in this measurement.

The principal idea is that the Ministry of Education and Culture and the Finnish National Board of Education support and encourage VET providers to pursue excellence when improving the quality of their operations. They entrust the VET providers themselves with doing follow-up and benchmarking and carrying out, for example, self-evaluations, peer reviews and other external assessments or audits.

The Finnish National Board of Education currently develops the follow-up of learning outcomes based on competence based vocational skills demonstration. This follow-up is also targeted at VET SEN providers and VET SEN students. The follow-up of the updated VET curriculum begins this year (2012). The IVET curriculum consists of the national core curricula, each VET provider's locally approved curricula and the students' personal study plans. There are 53 vocational upper secondary qualifications and 119 study programmes within them.

The Finnish Education Evaluation Council serves as an expert body for educational evaluation in connection with the Ministry of Education and Culture. The council plans and coordinates national evaluations. Evaluation for VET, including VET SEN 2009-2010 consists of:

- 'The implementation, practices and development of student welfare in vocational upper secondary education' (English summary available)
- 'We have evidence! How vocational skills demonstrations have been implemented in practice' (English summary available)

'Statistics Finland' produces data concerning the transition from school to further education and work. The results are described at the end of the year in terms of the transition to employment, unemployment, further studies, military service or another activity. In addition, the statistics describe the transition by area, industry, employer sector or other information. The statistics are produced by combining a number of Statistics





Finland's individual-based data files. No surveys are conducted among graduates. VET providers must pay to access this data.

## 2.6 VET teachers, trainers and other professionals

### 2.6.1 Information on the VET staff (teachers, trainers, career counsellors, transition officers, etc.)

Teaching staff at vocational institutions include teachers of core subjects, teachers of vocational studies, teachers providing special education and guidance counsellors for vocational institutions. Teachers of common core subjects have the same qualification requirements as subject teachers in basic and general upper secondary education. Teachers of vocational studies are required to have at least three years work experience in the field, have completed pedagogical studies of at least 60 ECTS credits and have an appropriate academic degree. This degree can be a master's or bachelor's degree or be the highest possible qualification in their own occupational field. The vocational teacher education includes basic studies in education, vocational subject pedagogic studies, teaching practice and other studies. The guiding principle of vocational teacher training is to equip trainee teachers with core pedagogical skills that may be applied to any subject. In addition to these, the qualification requirements for special needs teachers and guidance counsellors also include studies specialising in these areas. Training for vocational teachers, special needs teachers and guidance counsellors is provided by vocational teacher education colleges operating in conjunction with polytechnics. Vocational special needs teachers work with students with SEN at both mainstream VET institutions and special VET institutions.

**Table 5. Teachers' qualifications in VET institutions.**

	Permanent		Appointed time		Stand-in		Part time pension	
	F	Qualified %	F	Qualified %	F	Qualified %	F	Qualified %
Special VET institutions								
Principal, director	4	75	0	0,0	0	0,0	0	0,0
Vice-principal, head of department	9	88,9	0	0,0	0	0,0	0	0,0
Lecturer	114	99,1	4	50,0	1	0,0	3	100,0
Full-time teacher	45	95,6	92	31,5	3	0,0	5	100,0
Part-time teacher	1	0	3	0,0	0	0,0	0	0,0
Special teacher	38	92,1	8	37,5	2	50,0	1	100,0
Student counsellor	4	100	0	0,0	0	0,0	0	0,0
Other	2	100	1	0,0	0	0,0	0	0,0
Total	217	95,9	108	31,5	6	16,7	9	100,0
Mainstream VET Institutions								
Principal, director	88	97,7	7	71,4	3	100,0	2	100,0
Vice-principal, head of department	311	94,5	12	66,7	9	77,8	2	100,0
Lecturer	4 681	97,6	84	32,1	43	53,5	593	98,0
Full-time teacher	1 644	87,1	1 959	29,2	153	47,1	74	79,7
Part-time teacher	15	66,7	278	31,3	12	8,3	1	0,0
Special teacher	92	95,7	14	57,1	4	50,0	3	100,0
Student counsellor	167	92,8	22	68,2	9	66,7	6	100,0
Other	45	57,8	23	30,4	1	0,0	0	0,0
Total	7 043	94,5	2 399	30,4	234	48,7	681	95,9

Source of data: National Board of Education, Wera Web reporting –service.

In addition to special needs teachers, special VET institutions in particular also employ special needs assistants, educational guidance and school welfare officers, psychologists, doctors, guidance counsellors, various therapists, social workers, nursing and





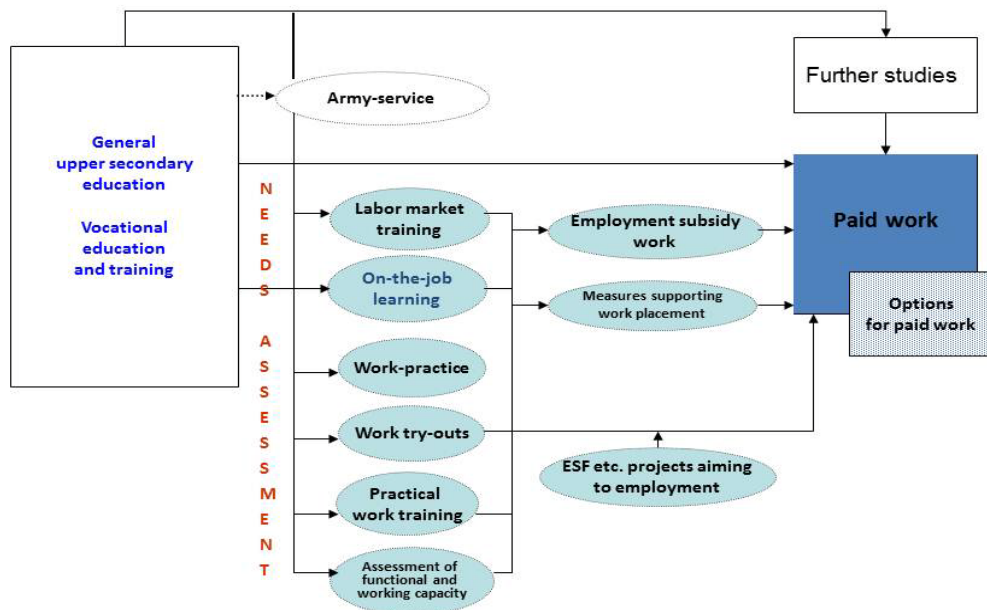
accommodation staff and other staff, for example to cover school transport. Many of these experts have a master or bachelor's degree qualification. Trainers and workplace instructors at enterprises do not have any particular qualification requirements, but they are generally skilled and experienced staff.

Teaching staff are generally obliged to participate in in-service training. In the case of teachers in vocational schools this is based on the terms of the collective agreements for civil servants. The number of days of required in-service training varies from 1-5 outside school hours per school year depending on the vocational sector. This type of continuing training is free of charge for teachers and they enjoy full salary benefits during their participation. The responsibility for funding such training rests with the teachers' employers. The content and implementation method of the training are decided by individual employers. Each employer may organise training itself or may order it from an education provider (universities, polytechnics, organisations, private continuing education and training providers). The teacher education departments and university continuing education centres and the FNBE provide teachers with further and continuing education and training every year. Participation in continuing education and training does not have a direct bearing on teachers' salary and career development. The training is intended to keep their skills and competences up to date.

#### *2.6.2 Information on the careers/employment guidance and counselling services offered to learners with SEN who are enrolled in VET programmes*

Special instruction within vocational education and training should primarily be provided in connection with mainstream VET instruction or in separate groups or both. VET SEN institutions are, in turn, responsible for providing education and training for students with the most severe disabilities. VET is provided in the form of special education and training for students who need special educational and student welfare services due to disability, illness, delayed development, emotional disorder or some other similar reason. It is the task of each VET provider to determine how to determine which students are in need of special education and training and draw up an IEP for them. VET SEN may deviate from the general provisions governing VET as determined in the relevant national core curriculum. The duration of studies and study arrangements may be adjusted where a student's health or previous studies dictate accordingly.

## From upper secondary education to working life



Originally made in Luovi's UraMatkaaja and Oulu Vocational College's URA PLUS projects

**Figure 6. From upper secondary education to working life.**

The National Core Curriculum for Upper Secondary Schools emphasises the fact that the purpose of special support is to help and support students so as to guarantee them equal opportunities to complete their upper secondary school studies. Once a student's learning difficulties have been identified, planning and implementation of support measures are started immediately, taking into account the information acquired on the student's study performance and their support needs during basic education. The VET provider's curricula will determine how instruction and support measures for special needs students are to be organised.

In Finland, education, guidance and other support services provided by educational sector are based on the different needs of individuals. During the last 30 years the principle of normalisation and the philosophy of integration have come strongly to the fore in the education of pupils and students in need of special support. The aim of the principle has been that the lives of disabled and disadvantaged people are as normal as possible. Integration in education is considered to be the means of implementing this normalisation. The objective has been social integration - the opportunity for people with special needs to participate in regular instruction at schools.

The FNBE coordinated a project called CHANCES – Developing career counselling services to prevent the exclusion of young people. The project was funded by the European Social Fund through the Equal Community Initiative Programme. One of the CHANCES-subprojects focused on developing career guidance for young people with special needs. Special needs education within vocational training and regional networks in special needs education are developed in the *Developing career guidance of young people with special needs* project of the Jyväskylä Vocational Institute. The focus of the project was career and life planning for students with special educational needs during their studies. The goal of the project was to offer individual career guidance to students with special educational needs and create flexible ways of studying, support access to the labour market and further studies and raise the level of expertise of special education



among special education teachers, other teachers and guidance counsellors. The target group of the project was young people with special needs with a recognised higher risk of dropping out of education and training. Flexible methods and tools suitable for the guidance and counselling of young people with special needs have been generated during the project, such as drawing up individual career plans, good practices to help young people's access to the labour market, models for improved guidance during on-the-job training periods, support tools for special education teachers and on-the-job training instructors to help them in the guidance and counselling of pupils following individual career plans and in recognising special needs.

## 2.7 Funding

The responsibility for funding vocational education and training is divided between the State and the municipalities. State funding (statutory government transfers) covers about 42 % of operating costs and some 58 % of funding comes from municipalities. Public funding covers both municipal and private providers equally. The funding criteria are the same irrespective of ownership type (public/private). Statutory government transfers are granted on calculatory grounds which are confirmed annually. Funding is based on a unit price and the number of students. The unit price is calculated based on actual current expenditure (unit costs per year per student) and the fields of education available from each provider.

All students in VET are entitled to receive instruction free of charge, free daily meals every school day and free accommodation in a hall of residence assigned by the educational institution. Students also have the opportunity to receive a school transport subsidy if he/she attends basic vocational education and the distance between the student's home and school is at least 10 kilometres with monthly travel expenses of over EUR 54. However, students are expected to cover some of their own study expenses, such as textbooks and the tools, equipment and materials for personal use that will remain their property at the end of their period of study.

Students are entitled to receive social and health care services free of charge, provided in co-operation with municipal social and health administrations. Many educational institutions have a multidisciplinary student welfare team to look after student's welfare. Disabled students are entitled to receive assistant services, other student welfare services and any special aids required for studying. Some services are offered by the educational institution, whereas others are organised as services provided by the student's municipality of residence in accordance with the Act on Services and Assistance for the Disabled (380/1987).

**Financial aid for students** is intended to provide an income to financially disadvantaged students whose parents are not under an obligation to finance their studies and who are not eligible for aid under some other provisions. Financial aid is provided in the form of the following benefits: Study Grant, Housing Supplement and Government guarantee for student loans. Student financial aid is available for upper secondary vocational education and training. The conditions for receiving student financial aid include full-time study, progress made in studies and the need for financial support. The aid is means-tested and determined according to the student's age, form of accommodation and income. In order to qualify for student financial aid, a student must have gained admission to post-comprehensive studies to be a full-time student, make satisfactory academic progress and be in need of financial assistance. Students in apprenticeship training receive pay (according to the relevant collective agreement), theoretical education free of charge, as well as travel and accommodation allowances. They also receive a daily allowance for the



period of theoretical studies if their pay does not cover that period. Apprentices with families are also entitled to family allowance.

**The Disability Allowance for persons aged 16 years or over** is aimed at making it easier for disabled persons to manage their everyday activities and to cope with their work and studies. The allowance can be awarded to persons over 16 years who have an illness or injury which will reduce their functional capacity for a period of at least one year. The purpose of the allowance is to compensate for the hardship, need of assistance, need of guidance or supervision, and/or costs resulting from an illness or injury. The disability allowance is payable at three rates depending on the need of assistance and guidance.

In certain conditions, the Finnish TE-Office can grant a subsidy for the salary costs to an employer recruiting an unemployed jobseeker. The objective of work arranged through a **pay subsidy** is to improve the vocational skills, competence and labour market position of the unemployed jobseeker and to promote the access of those having been unemployed for long periods to the open labour market. The **pay subsidy** is mainly used to employ persons who are long-term unemployed, disabled, young people aged less than 25 and jobless persons threatened by long-term unemployment or exclusion from the labour market. This subsidy can be received by State agencies and institutions, municipalities, companies and other private sector employers such as associations, foundations and households. A pay subsidy will be granted for work performed under an employment contract or for apprenticeship training. The employer shall comply with the provisions of labour legislation and collective agreements of the sector concerned. The employer must be committed to paying the salary indicated by the collective agreement applicable to the employment relationship. In case there is no applicable collective agreement, the usual and reasonable pay should be applied to the work in question. Employers can also receive a **subsidy for the adaptation of working conditions**. A subsidy for the adaptation of working conditions is max 2 500 Euros (3 500 Euros) per placement for persons with disabilities (with severe disabilities). The subsidy is meant to cover the adaptation of working machines and working conditions.

People with disabilities who cannot manage to do everyday activities due to their disability are entitled to a **personal assistant**. The disabled person contacts a social worker in their local area, who then evaluates whether there is a need to provide a personal assistant. People with disabilities use regular social services and special services. The latter include free transport services for work, study, running errands, social participation and recreation arranged by municipalities. These services are allocated on the basis of individual service plans. People with severe hearing, sight and speech disabilities are entitled to receive free interpretation services.