

Description of an example of successful national/local VET programmes for learners with SEN in Norway

1) Short abstract

In Norway, the Ministry of Education and the Directorate for Education and Training are responsible for the national curriculum, the VET structure and Educational Acts. At national level, active policies for employment are in place, financial support is provided by the state to companies, adjusted according to the professional capacities of the person (part of the salary paid by the state, the rest by the company). The authorities at county level are responsible for the schools and VET centres, the distribution of the VET financing provided by the state, providing apprenticeship and supervision. Vocational education and training is carried out both in schools and in public and private enterprises.

In upper secondary education there are about 180 programme areas that lead to vocational qualifications with a craft or journeyman's certificate. These are called recognised trades. In recognised trades, you start the training in upper secondary school and usually finish with in-service training in a training establishment, as an apprentice or training candidate. On one side, apprentices learn all subjects of the curriculum and they receive an apprenticeship contract from the company. On the other side, training candidates learn selected parts of the curriculum and receive a training contract and its goal that the candidate gets as high competence as possible. The county determines the training course together with the company. In the case that during the training period the candidate can achieve a full vocational qualification, the training contract can be changed into an ordinary apprenticeship contract. The candidate will actively participate in planning and be responsible for his/hers own learning. The company stated that a significant amount of time is spent on this type of training, they would like to receive more information from the concerned services. Training time is the same for both: two years in school based followed by two years enterprise-based training, but some changes can be individually considered. Apprentices end up with a craft or journeyman certificate; training candidates receive a certificate of competences. County must certify which companies are recognised as training ones, showing expertise and competence. Training candidates get help from the school, through counsellors, to apply, fill in the application and add the necessary documentation. It is important for the company to find the skills level of the young person, but it is more important his/her commitment.

This example shows its implementation on an ordinary upper secondary school situated on the region of Hamar located at the east part of Norway. This high school offer education programmes for specialisation in General Studies, Arts, Crafts and Design Studies, Electricity and Electronics, Media and Communication, Service and Transport and a Programme for Technical and

Industrial Production. The institution has 220 employees and 1350 students (2010/11), approximately 500 new students each year including 132 students with SEN (around 10% with learning problems). All students following vocational education have the opportunity and the right to pursue training in enterprises. Students do not decide which companies they wish to go to for training; it is up to companies to make their own choices. In this setting, they offer reduced classes for example in the mechanic unit, 1 teacher work with 15 students. The teachers are all highly qualified professionals that have continuous dialogue with the students during and after the training. These professionals are supported by assistants with health or social backgrounds. In Norway, all pupils have a right to adapted and differentiated learning and teaching programmes, according to their own requirements and needs (e.g. teaching qualifications, organisation, the school counselling service, special education teaching aids, adapting the classrooms, exams, etc.) named as Individual Educational Plan. Every six months an evaluation of the education described in the individual educational plan is followed by a report. Both, report and plan should be reviewed every year.

2) Highlights / Uniqueness

It is a national programme. The main model since 1975 has been to provide special education integrated within mainstream education. From 1994, when the right to three years' upper secondary education was granted to all young people, pupils with a need for specially adapted teaching were granted the right to be admitted to the foundation course of their choice and entitlement to up to five years' upper secondary education. They also have a legal right to guidance. The collaboration with the Vocational Training Board is essential for giving the student the vocational training at the workplaces. Branch unions" (private professional groups offering recognised training) are involved in vocational educational office. There are also recognised training centres such as enterprises or institutions, as well as training circles involving small enterprises who teach parts of the curriculum.

Vocational training at the workplace gives the students a better opportunity to find employment which could lead to a later employment contract, with all the benefits that comes with it for themselves and the society. The process for securing these apprenticeships is as follows. The county makes an agreement with companies and provides them with a fixed amount of funding for training candidates. The county makes an agreement with companies, giving them some fixed amount for these students and follows the student progress together with the company. It is relevant that the high school provide companies with accurate information about the needs and working conditions required for the students. The county authorities are under a legal

obligation to establish a follow-up service for young people to provide them with opportunities that will lead to formal competence.

3) Availability of evaluation data

The VET Department (county) has around 50 training candidate contracts. This year 26 applications were received. Individual guidance should be provided by the department in order to find out what type of subjects have been requested the students and find out what exactly they might need. All statistics can be found at: <http://www.hedmark.org/article.aspx?&m=4524&amid=76249>. 638 people have requested an individual assessment of competences, which includes learners at the end of (lower) secondary education. It does not follow that all those assessed will be considered as training candidates. The school informed that the dropout rate is only 2% (2010), which is very low compared to the average dropout rates at country and county levels. The Counselling service at Hamar Katedralskole includes 20 teachers with knowledge of special education. One is a specialised teacher and one has a master degree on special education. The rest have qualifications ranging from 6 months of studies to two years study of special education.

The amount of work provided by the counselling service corresponds to the equivalent of two teachers working 120% time. It includes: team leader work for special education; counselling on SNE; assessment; guidance to other teachers, students and parents; supporting the process when students with SEN are applying to county support; co-operation with external offices; providing a support in the process of applying for external services; making decisions concerning students with SEN in the school; supporting decisions concerning required adaptations. All the listed tasks correspond to 50-30% of their working time. Other teachers like for example those with special pedagogical skills are used in various support measures: they work sometimes as special education teacher, as ordinary teachers or as a part of a teachers' team. The school has few teachers only working on special education.

The school has 161 teachers, 141,6 (FTEs). There are other professionals with different backgrounds: two professionals with an upper secondary certificate to work with children and youngsters; 4 professionals as social workers or child welfare specialists with at least 3 years of higher education. 50 learners have had an individual decision. From those, 44 have been accepted after the individual evaluation. 50 learners have an Individual Educational programme. Types of disabilities at Hamar Katedralskole: physical, sensorial, learning problems on specific subjects, diverse neuropsychological conditions, mental problems, etc.