

European Patterns of Successful Practice in Vocational Education and Training

Participation of Learners with SEN/Disabilities in VET



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European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education



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CONTENTS

1. PREFACE	5
2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	7
3. INTRODUCTION	9
4. PROJECT DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY	11
Steps in the analysis process	11
<i>Step 1: Selection of examples</i>	11
<i>Step 2: Study visits</i>	11
<i>Step 3: Analysis of practice</i>	12
Limitations.....	13
5. ANALYSIS, RESULTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	15
5.1 VET institution management pattern	18
5.1.1 <i>School/VET institutional leadership</i>	18
5.1.2 <i>Managing multi-disciplinary teams</i>	19
5.2 Vocational education and training pattern	20
5.2.1 <i>Learner-centred approaches</i>	20
5.2.2 <i>Using individual plans for education, learning, training and transition</i>	22
5.2.3 <i>Dropout reduction strategy</i>	23
5.2.4 <i>Matching labour market skills requirements and the learners' skills</i>	24
5.3 Learners' pattern	25
5.3.1 <i>Focusing on learners' capabilities</i>	25
5.3.2 <i>Matching work opportunities and learners' individual wishes and expectations</i> ..	27
5.3.3 <i>Having established co-operation structures with local companies for practical training and/or employment after graduation</i>	28
5.4 Labour market pattern	29
5.4.1 <i>Safeguarding connections with local employers/companies for practical training and job opportunities based upon trust and past experiences</i>	29
5.4.2 <i>Supporting learners and employers during the transition phase into the open labour market</i>	30
5.4.3 <i>Providing follow-up activities to maintain learners' employment in companies</i> ...	31
6. DISCUSSION	33
Discussion of other relevant factors	33
Proposals regarding suitable result categories	35
Proposals regarding the use of results	37
ANNEX 1 LIST OF EXPERTS	38
ANNEX 2 LIST OF ALL INPUT, STRUCTURE AND PROCESS FACTORS	40
ANNEX 3 OVERVIEW OF FACTORS IN EACH OF THE FOUR PATTERNS	47



1. PREFACE

The 'Vocational Education and Training: Policy and Practice in the field of Special Needs Education (VET)' project has identified and investigated the key aspects of vocational education and training for learners with special educational needs (SEN)/disabilities, aged between 14 and 25, with a clear link to employment opportunities. In particular, the project has analysed '**what works**' in VET for learners with SEN/disabilities, '**why it works**' and '**how it works**'.

More than 50 country experts have been involved in the project activities, from 26 countries: Austria, Belgium, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom. Their expertise and competence have made a valuable contribution to the reflections and discussions that took place in project meetings, as well as to the development of the methodology and the main project outcomes. (Please see Annex 1 for a list of participants.)

The project has been supported by a Project Advisory Group of Agency Representatives. An extended Project Advisory Group also met throughout the project with representatives from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (Cedefop) to ensure consistency with other European and international initiatives in this area of work.

The VET project has led to a number of outputs, all of which are available from the project website: <http://www.european-agency.org/agency-projects/vocational-education-and-training>. These include:

- **a literature review**, providing the conceptual framework for the project and including a review of international research literature on project themes;
- **country reports**, providing information on the general Vocational Education and Training (VET) system as well as on the VET system for learners with SEN/disabilities in the participating countries;
- **a summary report** on the 'state of the art in Europe' with regard to policies and practices in the area of VET for learners with SEN/disabilities;
- **study visits reports**, with detailed information on the 28 VET practices analyses.

A further output is this report on European Patterns in VET, developed as a result of a coherent and comprehensive analysis of 28 VET practices, examined in the course of the project. The report identifies similarities and differences in successful VET examples and provides recommendations to improve the performance of countries' VET systems in particular areas. This report is complemented by a document that details the methodology employed in the project for analysing the study visit outcomes and for setting up the VET system model, also available from the project website.

Cor Meijer

Director

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2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Vocational Education and Training (VET) project has explored the key factors of VET for learners with special educational needs (SEN)/disabilities with a clear link to employment opportunities. Although the project has examined the content of VET programmes, its main focus has been on VET outcomes in relation to the labour market.

The key outcome highlighted in the course of the project analysis is that what is good and efficient practice for learners with SEN/disabilities in VET and in the transition to employment is good practice for *all* learners. Consequently, recommendations based upon this project's findings will also be useful in VET and the transition to employment for all learners.

These recommendations have been developed in order to improve the performance of countries' VET systems in particular areas. Four areas were observed and identified in many of the 28 study visit examples on which the project outcomes build. These areas have been called *patterns* within the project. Within these patterns, the following issues where VET systems require further improvement were identified:

VET institution management pattern

- School/VET institution leadership needs to develop an inclusive policy, where differences among learners are considered a 'normal' part of the educational culture, and to create an atmosphere of motivation and commitment. Effective leadership will be 'distributed', with a move away from a top-down approach towards teamwork and collaborative problem solving.
- Multi-disciplinary teams with clear roles need to adopt a teamwork approach and co-operate with a high level of internal communication (peer coaching, informal discussions, collaborative problem solving, etc.) and external communication with other services.

Vocational education and training pattern

- Learner-centred approaches with regard to planning, goal setting and curriculum design need to be used in the VET learning process, so that the curriculum, pedagogical methods and materials and assessment methods and goals are tailored to individual needs.
- The learning process needs to use flexible approaches which allow for the development and implementation of individual plans. A good plan informs and is informed by a multi-disciplinary team approach. It is an easy-to-use, living document that is regularly reviewed by all involved. Learners are involved from the beginning of the individual planning process and their voices are heard throughout.
- Schools/VET institutions need to undertake preventive educational action against dropouts in close co-operation with the local social services and to develop the necessary measures so that learners who become disengaged find new alternatives.
- VET programmes/courses need to be reviewed periodically, both internally (e.g. by validating them against recent labour market analyses) and/or externally (e.g. national agencies) in order to adapt to current and future skill needs.



Learners' pattern

- All staff need to put learners' abilities at the centre of their approaches and see opportunities rather than challenges. They should focus on what learners 'can' do, not what they 'cannot' do, and make all learners feel more confident and assertive.
- Success in VET and in the transition to the open labour market is unlikely if the learners' individual wishes and expectations are neglected. These wishes and expectations need to be respected and reflected in each step of the transition process.
- VET institutions need to develop partnerships and networking structures with a pool of local employers to ensure close co-operation with regard to learners' supervised practical training and finding employment after graduation.

Labour market pattern

- The school/VET institution needs to establish and maintain resilient connections with local employers over time. These connections are based upon the companies' growing confidence that they receive adequate support whenever they need it during the process.
- The transition from education to employment needs to be backed up by adequate support during the transition phase. Career counsellors/officers need to inform learners about employment possibilities, support them with job applications, inform and support employers and facilitate contact between both parties.
- In order to have a successful transition phase that leads to sustainable jobs in the open labour market, follow-up activities need to be undertaken by competent staff for as long as required, to meet the needs of young graduates and employers.

The project developed a VET system model based on the study visit outcomes in order to formulate recommendations that respect the complexity of VET systems. The use of a VET system model for developing recommendations adds value by:

- identifying all of the major factors that influence the issue at hand;
- highlighting the impact that any changes might have on other parts of the VET system;
- suggesting where measures should be targeted to be most efficient.

This VET system model builds upon the outcome of an analysis of 28 successful VET practices in 26 European countries, selected according to various criteria agreed by the project participants. Small teams of experts visited each of these sites and engaged with local partners and stakeholders. The project particularly sought to extract similarities and differences in successful VET systems for people with SEN/disabilities. Numerous factors that both supported and hindered effective practice were identified in these visits. They were subsequently reduced and transformed into a set of 68 success factors.

At the project's VET conference held in Cyprus in November 2012, experts discussed these success factors in order to highlight their relevance and their interconnection. Further analysis was undertaken to explore *why* certain factors appear together and what implications this has for the project recommendations.



3. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this report is to present a number of patterns of successful VET practices for learners with SEN/disabilities. These have been identified in the project analysis and provide the basis for recommendations to enhance the performance of VET systems in selected areas. The report also briefly presents the framework and the different stages of analysis used in the VET project.

This three-year Agency project (2010–2012) on the topic of ‘Vocational Education and Training: Policy and Practice in the field of Special Needs Education’ was initiated by Agency member countries, which recognised VET as a priority area requiring further investigation at national and European level.¹

The Council of Ministers has also made VET a priority, stating that every citizen must be equipped with the skills needed to live and work in the new information society and that special attention must be given to disabled people (Lisbon European Council, 2000; see footnote 2 below). Accordingly, several official documents² have highlighted the issue of VET in the context of learners with SEN/disabilities.

The main messages can be summarised as follows:

- VET should be equitable and efficient.
- The development of high-quality VET is a crucial and integral part of the Lisbon strategy, particularly in terms of promoting social inclusion.
- VET should be addressed to all sections of the population, offering attractive and challenging pathways to those with high potential, whilst at the same time addressing those at risk of educational disadvantage and labour market exclusion, such as people with SEN.
- Official data shows that disabled people continue to be disproportionately excluded from the labour market. Moreover, people with learning or intellectual disabilities are even less likely to be in work than those with physical disabilities.
- The exclusion of people with disabilities from the labour market is a serious concern from the perspective of equal opportunities. Countries should make it a priority to achieve better results for, among others, learners with special needs, as well as to promote personalised learning through timely support and well co-ordinated services, to integrate services within mainstream schooling and to ensure pathways to further education and training.

¹ The project has built on the main findings of two Agency projects: ‘Transition from School to Employment’ and ‘Individual Transition Plans: Supporting the Move from School to Employment’, as well as on the main findings of relevant projects and research studies.

² These include the Lisbon European Council, March 2000; *Declaration of the European Ministers of Vocational Education and Training*, November 2002; *Draft Conclusions of the Council and the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States*, October 2004; *Communiqué of the European Ministers of Vocational Education and Training*, December 2006; *Communication from the Commission to the Council, the European Parliament, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions. Delivering lifelong learning for knowledge, creativity and innovation*, November 2007 and *Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions – New Skills for New Jobs – Anticipating and matching labour market and skills needs*, December 2008.



The aim of the project and the VET practice analysis was to identify and investigate the key aspects of VET programmes for learners with SEN/disabilities aged between 14 and 25, with a clear link to employment opportunities. In particular, the project investigated ‘what works’ in VET for learners with SEN/disabilities, ‘why it works’ and ‘how it works’. Although the project has examined the content of the VET programmes, its main focus is on the VET outcomes in relation to the labour market.

This report is structured as follows: after the preface in section 1, the executive summary in section 2 and this introduction, section 4 provides an overview of the design and methodology of the VET practice analysis that contributed to the goal of this project. Section 5 presents the analysis and main results, with the description of the four patterns observed in the study visits with the relevant recommendations. Section 6 highlights further conclusions of the project analysis. A list of all the success factors identified during the study visits, as well as the success factors identified in the four patterns, are provided in Annexes 2 and 3, whereas Annex 1 is a list of experts participating in the project.



4. PROJECT DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

In order to conduct an analysis of VET practice in 26 countries, the participating Agency member countries agreed upon a common framework and a methodology to ensure the validity, homogeneity and efficiency of the project approach and the subsequent analysis. The project participants decided that small teams of experts would visit each of the participating countries in order to examine individual examples of VET for learners with SEN/disabilities and analyse the individual study visit outcomes.

The aim of the study visits and the final analysis was to identify and investigate the key aspects of VET for learners with SEN/disabilities aged between 14 and 25, with a clear link to employment opportunities. In particular, the objective was not just to understand **what works**, but also to gain a deeper understanding of **why it works** and **how it works**. The focus was on the content of the VET programmes, on the settings in which these programmes were operating and on the main VET results in relation to the labour market.

Steps in the analysis process

Step 1: Selection of examples

The first step of the process involved selecting examples of successful national/local VET programmes for learners with SEN/disabilities in every participating country. The selection was based on various criteria put forward by the experts during the project's kick-off meeting, including the requirement that all examples should clearly demonstrate an *inclusive* approach to VET for learners with SEN/disabilities.

With regard to this inclusive approach, the differences between the various VET systems of the participating countries have to be taken into account. It became evident that some of the examples made reference to separate training programmes for learners with SEN/disabilities. However, it was agreed that, in addition to the focus on inclusion, consideration should also be given to VET programme outcomes, i.e. the extent to which programmes prepare learners to find a job in the open labour market. For this reason, some segregated programmes were included.

Step 2: Study visits

The aim of the practical analysis was to explore factors that might have a positive or negative impact on VET processes and the outcomes for individual learners with SEN/disabilities. The process also aimed to explore the inter-relationships between different factors, as some might be essential, whilst others might be contradictory or mutually exclusive.

The study visit programme, which lasted from November 2010 to June 2012, comprised 28 study visits³ to selected VET examples. Two or three experts from participating countries joined each study visit with one Agency staff member and local partners and stakeholders connected with the host VET programme.

The experts' task was to familiarise themselves with and better understand each VET example and investigate the factors that appear to facilitate both the way VET is carried out and the outcomes of each particular VET process.

The study visits comprised three inter-related and equally important parts:

³ In the United Kingdom, examples were visited in England, Northern Ireland and Wales.



1. Meeting with the stakeholders.

Aim: presentation of the project and discussion with the different stakeholders involved in the VET process in order to gather information from different perspectives (e.g. service providers, head teachers, teachers/trainers, other professionals, representatives of young learners, representatives of families, local employers, finance providers, local policy makers, non-governmental organisations, etc.).

2. Actual visit to the location of the VET programme.

Aim: site visit, including local activities, and discussion with professionals and young learners in order to gain a deeper understanding of the VET programme and the main outcomes in relation to the labour market. This part also included visits to local companies and discussion with employers and young learners who were carrying out their practical training and/or had a job after graduation.

3. Expert meeting to discuss and consolidate the observations.

Aim: discussion centred on the information provided about the VET project, the visit to the project and the discussion with the stakeholders involved.

Step 3: Analysis of practice

The final step consisted of a coherent and comprehensive analysis of the individual study visits and the identification of issues that collectively provide the added value of this Europe-wide study. Each individual example was analysed on the final day of every study visit. The 28 individual results were then analysed to extract the similarities and differences with regard to *why* the example was successful. Experts' experiences of previous projects, together with the literature review, had already identified numerous factors as being conducive to successful VET for learners with SEN/disabilities. One form of analysis could therefore have been to consider the 28 examples against a given list of 'success factors', in the style of a checklist. However, the project experts decided to conduct the individual analyses without a given set of potential success factors. Instead, a completely new list of factors was produced.

The study visit teams identified a large number of factors that both supported and hindered effective practice. Using an iterative process, these were reduced and transformed into a set of 68 success factors.⁴ Some of these factors were observed in many of the visited examples, i.e. they had a high frequency. It appears that these highly frequent factors are common to many of the examples despite different economic, policy, cultural or other contexts. Consequently, these were of particular interest for further analysis, which aimed to develop recommendations that are applicable and useful in many different contexts. A list of all 68 factors is included in Annex 2.

At the VET conference held in Cyprus in November 2012, experts discussed these factors and highlighted both their relevance and their interconnection. Working groups then developed and documented explanations for these connections.

Each individual factor identified by the project was already known from research and other studies, as well as from the experts' own experiences. The conference outcomes indicated that, rather than looking into the details of each individual factor, the project should explore

⁴ A detailed description of the methodology and intermediate results is available as an electronic document on the project web area: <http://www.european-agency.org/agency-projects/vocational-education-and-training>



why certain factors appear together and the implications of this view for the recommendations to be developed.

It can be seen that sometimes individuals make VET successful, despite difficult conditions, while in other cases, where the conditions seem to be optimal, VET is not as successful as might be expected. Furthermore, evidence from visits shows that any lasting improvement of the VET system that focuses on single aspects (e.g. financial support of employers, quota systems, focus on practical training, VET extension schemes) has only a limited impact on the overall success.

It appears that educational systems in general, and VET systems in particular, have a certain level of complexity. This complexity needs to be understood in order to draw meaningful conclusions and develop effective recommendations.

Complex systems like the VET system contain several elements that influence, or are influenced by, each other. In this instance they include stakeholders like teaching staff, learners and employers; organisations such as schools, companies and resource centres; and activities like guidance, teaching, dropout prevention, etc.

Rather than attempting to identify all elements of the 28 VET systems observed in the examples and to understand how the elements within each of these systems influence each other, the project attempted to reduce this inherent complexity by employing two particular measures. Firstly, only those VET system elements that were considered relevant for the success of the examples are subject to further analysis. Secondly, by focusing on those elements that appear in many or all of the examples, the project avoided looking at 28 VET systems individually. Instead, it puts the commonalities of those VET systems in the foreground. Obviously, so-called 'highly frequent success factors' fulfil both requirements: they are considered relevant and they were observed in the majority of the examples. In order to set up a VET system model that comprises these success factors, it was necessary to determine if and how the factors influence each other. Each success factor was checked against every other factor by using statistical methods and through an assessment by a group of experts.

The extended Project Advisory Group determined whether any success factor A had an impact on any success factor B and if so, whether the impact level was weak, medium or strong.

The result of this group work is a network of connected factors that establish a *VET system model*, which reflects the key characteristics of the 28 examples visited. This model has been expressed as a diagram that contains the highly frequent success factors, with arrows originating from those factors that influence other factors. As this diagram is quite complex, only those parts that are of relevance to draw certain conclusions will be included in section 5. The full diagram is available in the Project Methodology paper.

In section 5, this VET system model has been used as the basis for the project recommendations. Selected parts of this VET system model have been used firstly to reduce the full model's complexity and secondly to replace recommendations based upon single factors with those that take account of the specific context and inter-relationships of each factor within the model.

Limitations

The approach taken in this project may contain a certain bias that needs further discussion to enable the reader to better understand and interpret the outcomes in context.



Firstly, the VET project's study visit hosts knew beforehand that their example was selected as a 'good example'. For this reason, the presentations given and insights provided during the visits often focused on the aspects that were thought to be the key success factors. The duration of the field visit (about 1.5 to 2 days on average) and the need to travel to different locations (e.g. ministries, schools, companies) limited the depth of insights. Therefore, while the project will give an overview of successful VET practices in Europe, it will not provide answers to all the questions that may arise.

Secondly, the practical focus of the study visits was on the VET institution and its VET programmes. As a result, other factors – for example, the specific policy framework or financial support schemes for employers who hire learners with SEN – were not central and therefore are less evident in the set of success factors. While all participants agree that those and other areas are also highly relevant, a specific focus was necessary to optimise the limited study visit time.

Furthermore, as described in the previous section, a number of factors that were identified in certain study visits were not taken into consideration when creating the system model. While it was necessary to disregard these factors in order to find similarities throughout the different example frameworks and settings, the implications of this action also need to be discussed. The experts identified every one of the 68 factors as being relevant in themselves, i.e. their relevance to each example in which they were found did not depend on how frequently they occurred in the study visits. Focusing on factors that appear in the majority of examples might exclude the very factors that are key to innovative approaches, but are not yet widespread or common practice in VET. Consequently, the project also analysed and discussed the factors that were not subject to the previously described process of setting up a VET system model. The outcomes of these discussions are provided in section 6, where further conclusions are drawn. It is recommended that these conclusions also be considered in the context of implementing or maintaining VET for learners with SEN/disabilities.

In this context, it is important to highlight the new approaches being taken in some countries in the form of resource centres. These centres enable young people with SEN/disabilities to lead inclusive lives, by providing support in all aspects of life. The resource centres act as a catalyst in bringing several different sectors together, such as Ministries of Education, Health and Employment, local authorities, companies, parents' associations, etc. They develop a synergy between training issues, employment issues, housing issues and citizenship. They bridge the gap by providing a progressive transition in the mainstream sector for those aged 16 and over and by providing specialist support. Resource centres empower individuals beyond immediate practical support and play a key role in changes to the decision-making process regarding suitable educational opportunities and employment in the open labour market.

Another aspect for discussion relates to the analysis procedure. While all study visits and the validation of factors within the Cyprus conference were performed with the involvement of all experts (representing both the practical and the policy level), the establishment of the VET system model was based upon the work of a smaller group of experts in the extended Project Advisory Group. For practical reasons, specialist literature on system design and analysis recommends that, in order to reach agreement, such work be carried out by a smaller group, provided that all relevant perspectives are represented. However, while the system model was set up by a small team, the results from this work were circulated to all experts for final validation.



5. ANALYSIS, RESULTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Before starting to build up a VET system model based upon the study visits, it was necessary to add a few more elements to the set of success factors, that so far focused on structure, input or process-related aspects of VET. Creating a model for the complex VET system, however, requires an ultimate aim towards which all system elements are – or should be – aligned. In this project this aim is *successful VET and transition to the open labour market for learners with SEN/disabilities*. Many success factors directly contribute to this aim, but it was also observed in the visits that there are some outcome-related factors that are, to some extent, preconditions to this main aim. If the VET system fails to address just one of these preconditions, the ultimate aim will be difficult to achieve or to maintain.

The following factors, discussed and agreed upon by the Project Advisory Group, were therefore added to the list of success factors (the characters in parentheses will be used in the diagrams throughout this chapter for ease of reference):

- (A) Learners' confidence that challenges can be managed;
- (B) Matching labour market skills requirements and the learners' skills;
- (C) Employers' confidence that challenges due to SEN/disability can be managed;
- (D) Occurrence of a job vacancy in the appropriate geographical area at the time a learner is looking for a job;
- (E) Matching work opportunities and learners' individual wishes and expectations;
- (F) Successful VET and transition to the open labour market for learners with SEN/disabilities.

This complete set of factors was then analysed with regard to cause–effect relationships. The extended Project Advisory Group examined only those potential connections for which the study visits had produced sufficient evidence. These connections were identified via the calculation of correlations between all factors. In the analysis, the group decided whether there was a cause–effect relationship, thus developing a complex network of inter-related factors that reflects the reality of successful VET examples observed in the study visits.

Depending on the degree of influence a factor has on other factors, or the extent to which a certain factor is influenced by others, all factors can be assigned to certain categories with distinct characteristics. For example, factors that are influenced by a few others, but have an influence on many other factors (called *active* factors) have the potential to impact upon wider parts of the system. They are therefore considered a good starting point for interventions to initiate changes in the VET system. Factors that hardly influence any other factors (called *slow/absorbing* factors) will have barely any impact on the system. Therefore they should not be a priority for intervention; rather it is suggested that this type of factor should be used for monitoring the system, e.g. by developing suitable indicators that make the state of this factor visible. This type of additional information is used to make the recommendations effective and also – with regard to the efforts necessary for interventions to improve the system – more efficient.

Different groups of stakeholders (e.g. learners, teaching staff, employers) are involved with different parts of the whole VET system and, consequently, only those factors that belong to the respective part of the system are of relevance to them. However, the VET system model does not yet distinguish different stakeholder roles. In consequence, the next step



divides the VET system model into suitable parts by distinguishing the following four stakeholder roles:

- VET institution managers
- VET staff
- learners
- current and future employers/labour market representatives.

These parts provide a simplified view of the inter-relationships between factors, relevant to each specific role. As these parts of the VET system model also represent success factors that were repeatedly observed in the study visits, they are called *patterns*. Annex 3 comprises an overview of the factors that belong to each of the four patterns.

It is noteworthy that factors may appear in, or belong to, more than one of these patterns. For example, the factor *'Having multi-disciplinary teams'* appears in the VET institution management pattern (because teams have to be managed), in the vocational education and training pattern (because each team member contributes to the educational and training process with specific competences) and in the learners' pattern (because the learner is confronted with several people who are responsible for different tasks or subjects in the learning process).

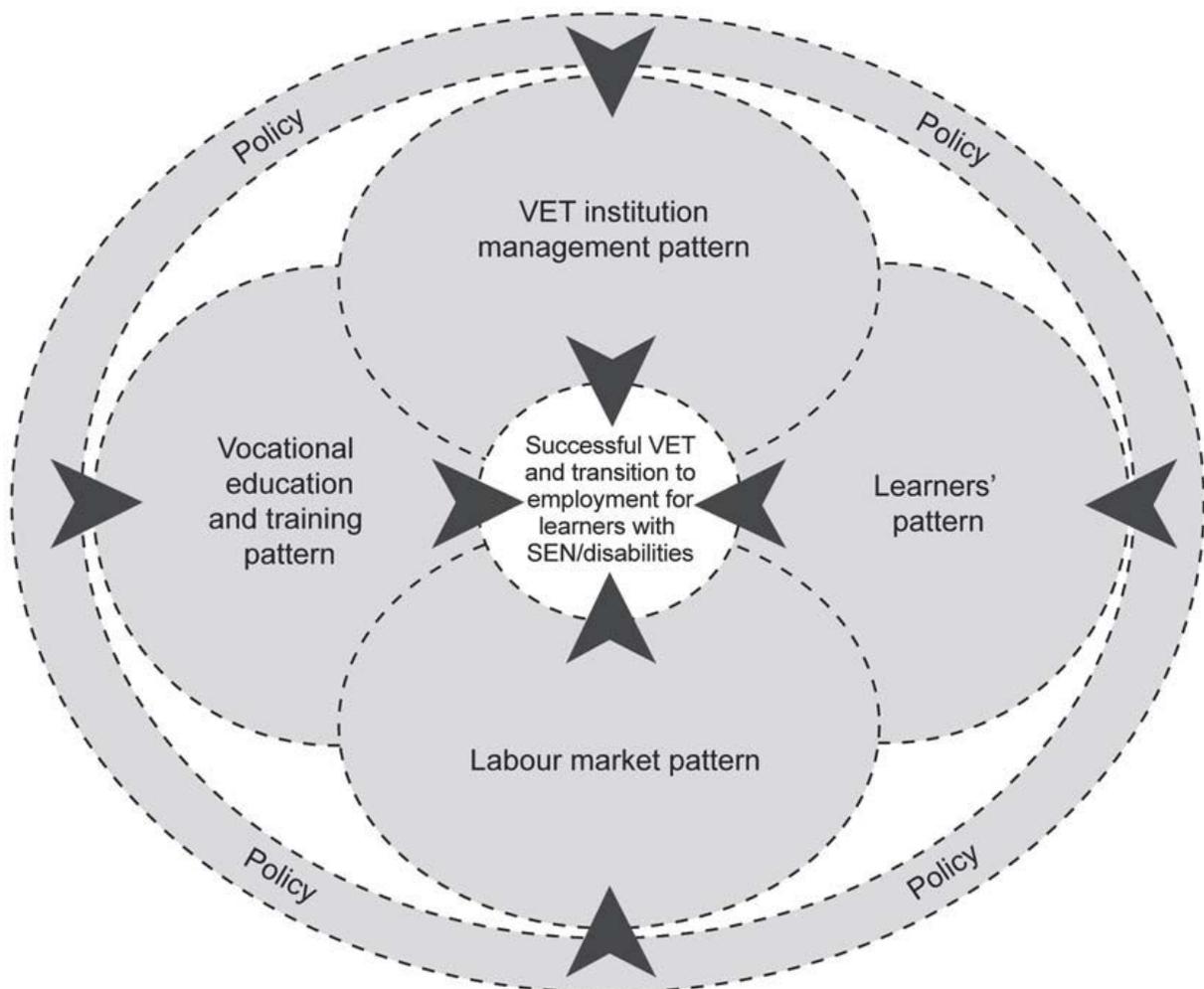


Figure 1 VET patterns



Figure 1 shows the four patterns and how they contribute to achieving the system's overall aim, i.e. providing successful VET and transition to employment for learners with SEN/disabilities. The policy level, represented by the outer circle, may impact upon the factors within the patterns. Recommendations for the policy level need to ensure that policies appropriately align the relevant factors so that each pattern makes the optimum contribution towards the VET system's aim.

The final step in the analysis aimed to identify areas where recommendations are required to further improve the VET system's performance. These areas were mentioned in discussions on the last day of each study visit where aspects that, in the experts' view, needed further attention were highlighted. The following issues, linked to the respective success factors within the system model, were identified in many of the 28 study visit examples:

VET institution management pattern

- School/VET institutional leadership;
- Managing multi-disciplinary teams.

Vocational education and training pattern

- Learner-centred approaches;
- Using individual plans for education, learning, training and transition;
- Dropout reduction strategy;
- Matching labour market skills requirements and the learners' skills.

Learners' pattern

- Focusing on learners' capabilities;
- Matching work opportunities and learners' individual wishes and expectations;
- Having established co-operation structures with local companies for practical training and/or employment after graduation.

Labour market pattern

- Safeguarding connections with local employers/companies for practical training and job opportunities based upon trust and past experiences;
- Supporting learners and employers during the transition phase into the open labour market;
- Providing follow-up activities to maintain learners' employment in companies.

Each of the abovementioned issues will be analysed in more detail in the following sections. The analysis focuses on each identified factor that needs further attention and on all other factors within the pattern that either have an influence on or are directly influenced by that specific factor. These focused factors are presented in diagrams.⁵ Based upon that analysis, recommendations that are likely to improve the system are made for each selected factor.⁶

⁵ An arrow from A to B indicates that A has an impact on B. Bold arrows indicate a strong impact.

⁶ To support the reader, all factors are referenced with a number or character in the figures. A list of all input, structure and process factors is included in Annex 2. The additional outcome factors are listed in section 5 of this report.



Some factors have a strong influence on many other factors. These are called *active* factors and they have the potential to impact upon the whole system. Addressing measures towards these active factors is therefore efficient. Active factors are marked with [+] in the figures. Some other factors both influence and are influenced by numerous other factors. These factors are called *critical* factors. They also have a strong impact, yet care must be taken in changing these factors, as this may have numerous consequences, both desired and undesired. Critical factors are marked with [#] in the figures of this chapter.

5.1 VET institution management pattern

5.1.1 School/VET institutional leadership

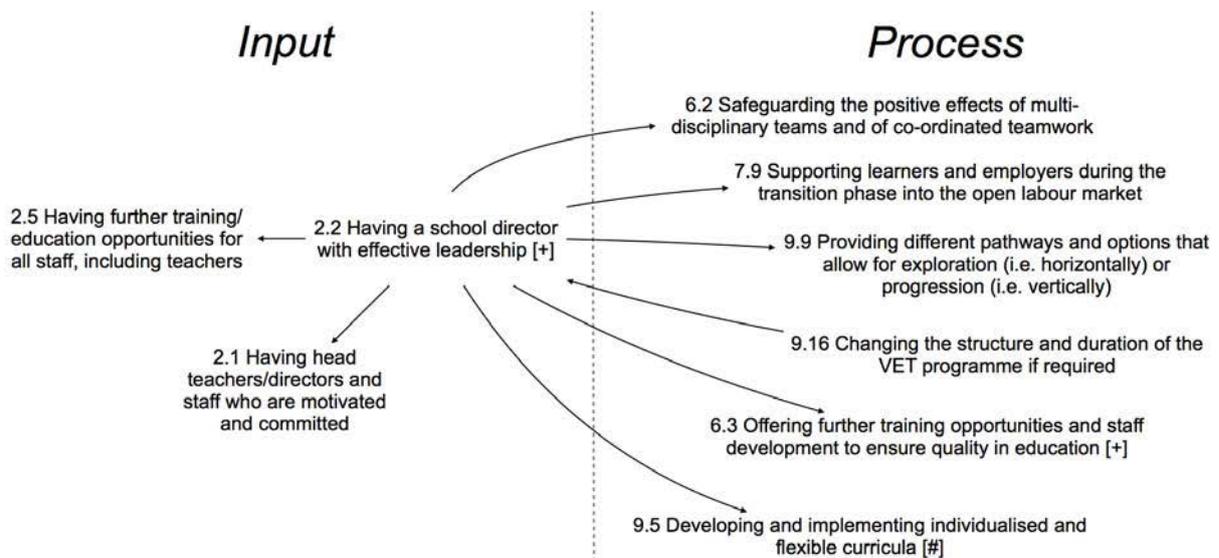


Figure 2 School/VET institutional leadership

Description

Effective school leadership requires leaders to look ahead and be flexible, as well as to change the structure and duration of the VET programme to match the learners' needs, if required. Effective leaders will also offer further professional development opportunities to all staff, including teachers, to ensure quality in education. Effective leaders create an atmosphere where all staff are motivated and committed. They contribute to the development and implementation of individualised and flexible curricula for learners, and to the provision of different pathways and options that allow for exploration (i.e. horizontal) or progression (i.e. vertical) to match the learners' needs. Effective leadership safeguards the positive effects of multi-disciplinary teams and of co-ordinated teamwork. It ensures that support is provided to learners and employers during the transition phase into the open labour market.

Recommendations

School leadership needs to develop an inclusive policy, where differences among learners are considered a 'normal' part of the educational culture, and to create an atmosphere of motivation and commitment. Effective leadership will be 'distributed', with a move away from a top-down approach towards teamwork and collaborative problem solving.

Effective school leadership benefits from leaders looking ahead and being flexible enough to change the structure and duration of the VET programmes to meet learners' needs.



5.1.2 Managing multi-disciplinary teams

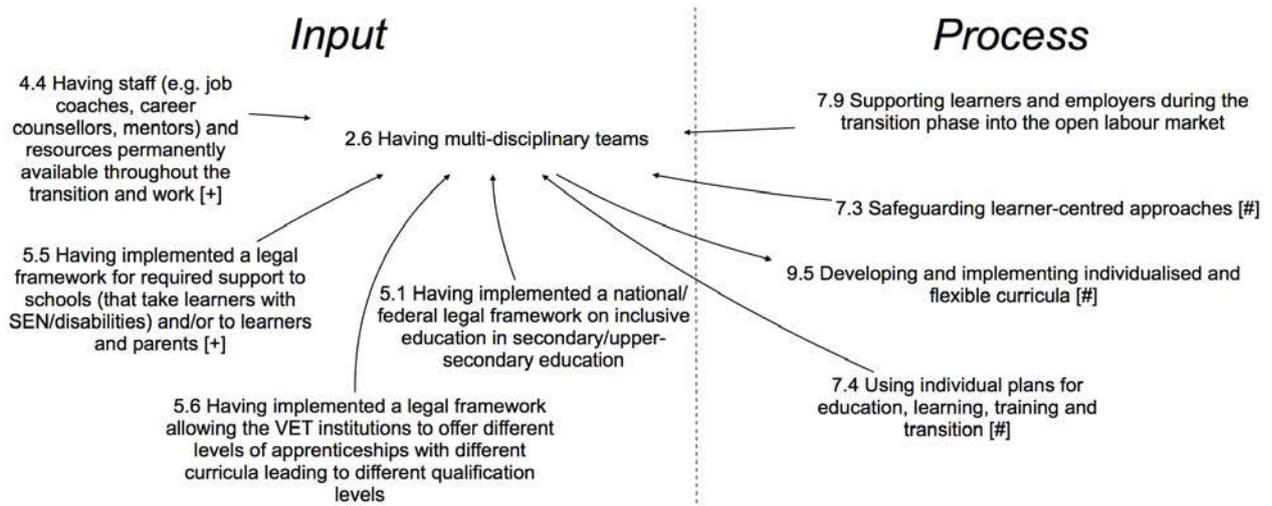


Figure 3 Managing multi-disciplinary teams

Description

Multi-disciplinary teams should have sufficient staff (e.g. job coaches, career counsellors, mentors, etc.) and resources permanently available throughout the transition and work. Using individual plans for education, learning, training or transition, as well as safeguarding learner-centred approaches and appropriate support of learners and employers during the transition phase into the open labour market all require multi-disciplinary teams. These teams, at the same time, can support the development and implementation of individualised, flexible curricula.

Efficient and effective multi-disciplinary teams should be safeguarded by a national/federal legal framework on inclusive education in secondary/upper-secondary education and on providing the required support to schools and/or to learners and parents. The legal framework should also allow VET institutions to offer different levels of apprenticeships with different curricula, leading to different qualification levels.

Recommendations

Multi-disciplinary teams with clear roles need to adopt a teamwork approach and cooperate with a high level of internal communication (peer coaching, informal discussions, collaborative problem solving, etc.) and external communication with other services.

In order to support the work of multi-disciplinary teams, it is beneficial to have staff with competence and expertise to develop individual plans, safeguard learner-centred approaches and support learners and employers in the transition phase.

The work of multi-disciplinary teams needs to be backed up by a clear national/federal legal framework on inclusive education that entails:

- national goals on inclusive education;
- adequate support and provisions relating to learners with SEN/disabilities;
- decentralisation of responsibilities;
- flexibility allowing for a variety of apprenticeships, curricula and qualification levels, as well as supporting learner-centred approaches.



5.2 Vocational education and training pattern

5.2.1 Learner-centred approaches

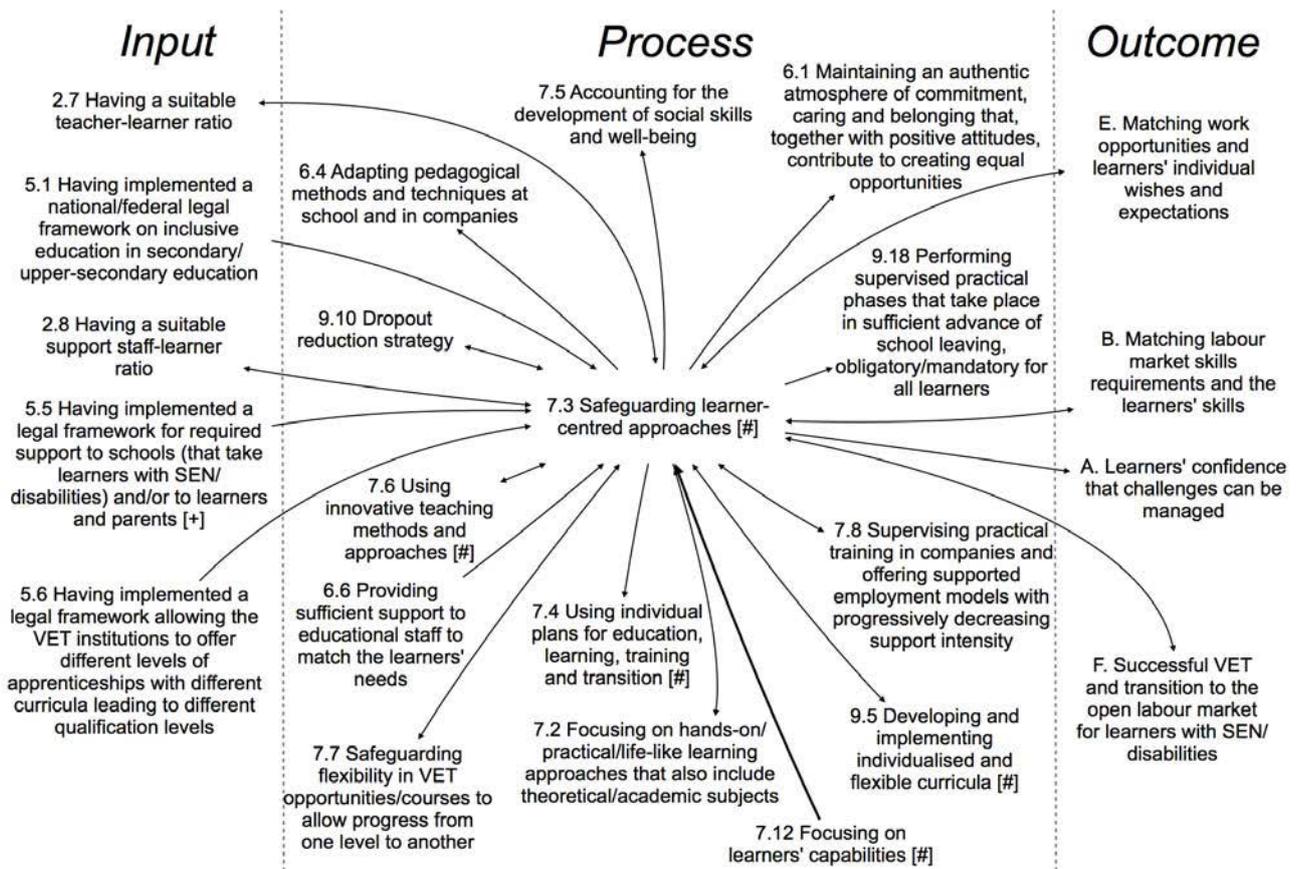


Figure 4 Learner-centred approaches

Description

Learner-centred approaches should be safeguarded by the implementation of a legal framework on inclusive education ensuring the required support to schools and/or learners and parents. It is also beneficial if VET institutions are allowed to offer different levels of apprenticeships with different curricula, leading to different qualification levels. In order to implement learner-centred approaches, sufficient support must be provided to educational staff to enable them to meet the learners' needs.

Learner-centred approaches both influence and are influenced by several factors, such as:

- the use of innovative teaching methods and approaches;
- the implementation of individualised and flexible curricula;
- having a suitable teacher–learner and support staff–learner ratio;
- having flexibility in VET opportunities and courses to allow progress from one level to another;
- contributing to actions that prevent or reduce dropout;
- maintaining an atmosphere of commitment, caring and belonging.

Learner-centred approaches also impact on the development of social skills and practical learning approaches and support a focus on learners' capabilities. Furthermore, the



adaptation of pedagogical methods and techniques in schools and companies and the use of individual plans are influenced by learner-centred approaches.

Learner-centred approaches impact upon supervised practical training in companies prior to school leaving and on supported employment models with progressively decreasing levels of support. Thus they contribute to the correlation between work opportunities and learners' individual wishes and expectations and the correlation between labour market skills requirements and the learners' skills. Finally, they contribute to increasing learners' confidence that challenges can be managed and ultimately to successful VET and transition to the open labour market for learners with SEN/disabilities.

Recommendations

Learner-centred approaches with regard to planning, goal setting and curriculum design need to be used in the VET learning process, so that the curriculum, pedagogical methods and materials and assessment methods and goals are tailored to individual needs.

Safeguarding learner-centred approaches benefits from:

- using innovative teaching methods and materials, as well as individualised and flexible curricula;
- providing supervised practical training and offering supported employment models in companies;
- matching labour market skills requirements and work opportunities and the learners' skills, wishes and expectations.



5.2.2 Using individual plans for education, learning, training and transition

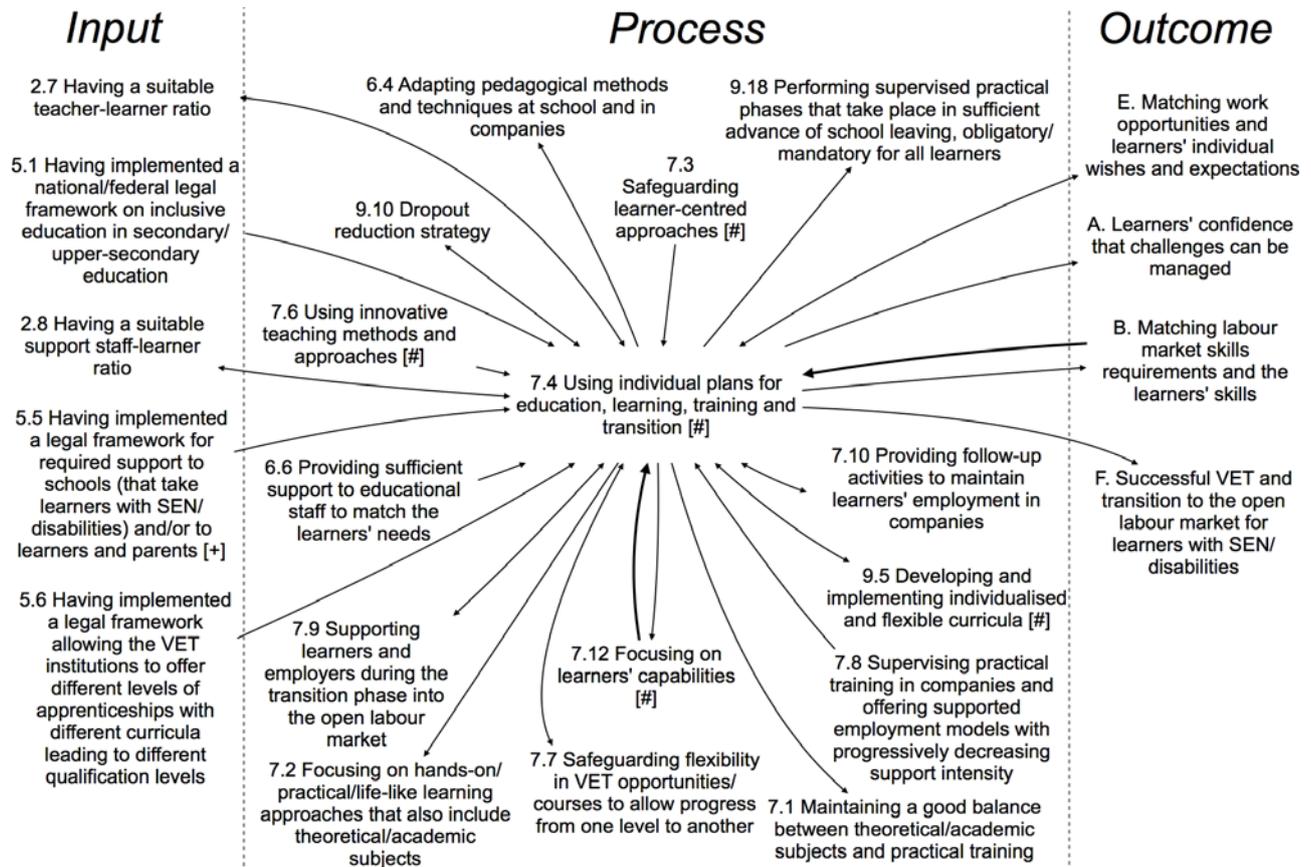


Figure 5 Using individual plans for education, learning, training and transition

Description

The use of individual plans for education, learning, training and transition is safeguarded by the implementation of a legal framework. This framework should include a focus on inclusive education, ensuring that the required support is given to schools, learners and parents and that VET institutions are allowed to offer different levels of apprenticeships with different curricula, leading to different qualification levels. The effective use of individual plans is influenced by the use of innovative teaching methods and approaches and by offering supported employment models. The development and implementation of individualised, flexible curricula, the provision of sufficient support to educational staff to meet the learners' needs and the safeguarding of learner-centred approaches also impact upon the use of individual plans.

Individual plans require a suitable teacher-learner ratio, a suitable support staff-learner ratio and flexibility in VET opportunities/courses to allow progress from one level to another. Individual plans also impact upon these factors. Such plans also contribute towards maintaining a good balance between theoretical subjects and practical training, the focus on learners' capabilities and the use of hands-on/practical, authentic learning approaches, and actions to prevent or reduce dropout. The use of individual plans impacts on the adaptation of pedagogical methods and techniques, on supervised practical training in companies and on the support of learners and employers during the transition phase and beyond to maintain learners' employment in companies.

On the outcome side, the use of individual plans contributes to the match between work opportunities and learners' individual wishes and expectations and to the match between



labour market skills requirements and the learners' skills. Finally, they also contribute to increasing learners' confidence that challenges can be managed and ultimately to successful VET and transition to the open labour market.

Recommendations

The learning process needs to use flexible approaches which allow for the development and implementation of individual plans. A good plan informs and is informed by a multi-disciplinary team approach. It is an easy-to-use document that is regularly reviewed and further developed by all involved. Learners are involved from the beginning of the individual planning process and their voices are heard throughout.

The use of individual plans is supported by:

- implementing individualised and flexible curricula, and safeguarding learner-centred approaches;
- supporting learners and employers during the transition phase and providing follow-up activities;
- matching labour market skills requirements and work opportunities and learners' skills, wishes and expectations.

5.2.3 Dropout reduction strategy

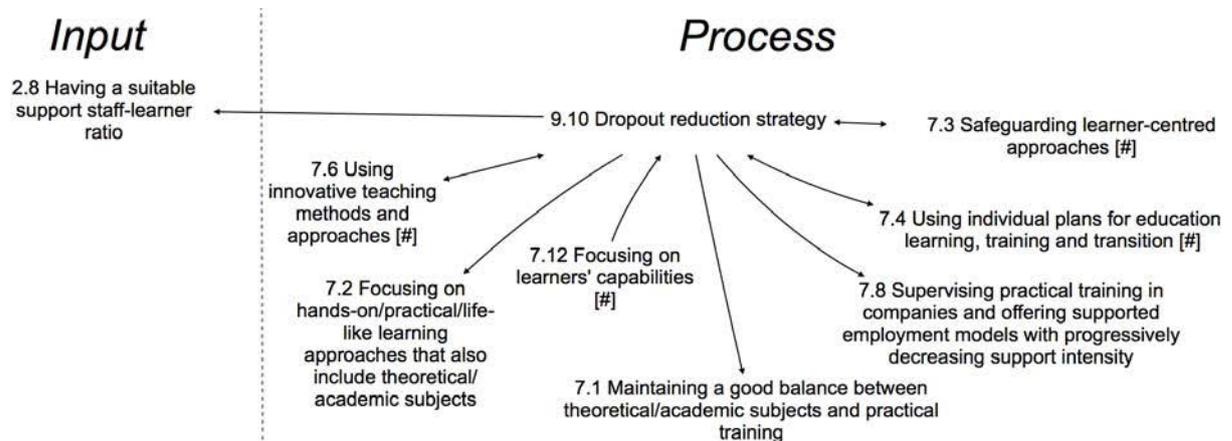


Figure 6 Dropout reduction strategy

Description

Acting to prevent or reduce dropout both influences and is influenced by the use of innovative teaching methods and approaches, the use of individual plans and the safeguarding of learner-centred approaches. Focusing on learners' capabilities also contributes to preventing or reducing dropout.

Dropout prevention, in turn, contributes to a focus on practical learning approaches that also includes theoretical/academic subjects and maintains a good balance between theoretical subjects and practical training. It also contributes to supervised practical training in companies and to supported employment models with progressively decreasing levels of support. Dropout prevention actions require resources and therefore also impact upon the support staff–learner ratio.



Recommendations

The school/VET institution needs to undertake preventive educational action against dropouts in close co-operation with the local social services and to develop the necessary measures so that learners who become disengaged find new alternatives.

Efficient actions to prevent or reduce dropouts benefit from:

- using innovative teaching methods, practical learning approaches and individual plans;
- focusing on learners' capabilities and safeguarding learner-centred approaches.

5.2.4 Matching labour market skills requirements and the learners' skills

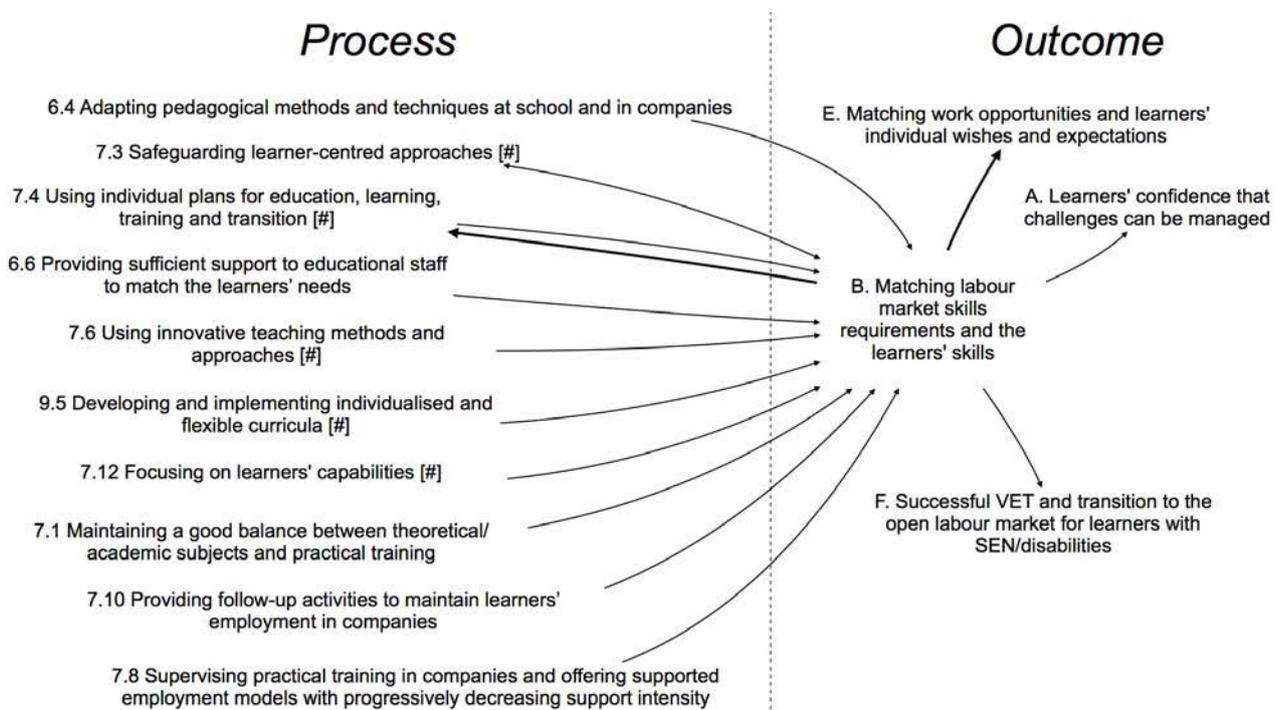


Figure 7 Matching labour market skills requirements and the learners' skills

Description

An appropriate match between labour market skills requirements and the learners' skills is an outcome factor, influenced by numerous other factors. For example, adapting pedagogical methods and techniques at school and in companies, as well as providing sufficient support to educational staff to match the learners' needs, has an impact on this correlation. Equally, maintaining a good balance between theoretical/academic subjects and practical training and using innovative teaching methods and approaches all influence the skill requirements match. Providing supervised practical training in companies, offering supported employment models, providing follow-up activities to maintain learners' employment in companies and focusing on learners' capabilities all also influence this correlation. Developing and implementing individualised and flexible curricula contributes to achieving a match between the skills required by the labour market and the learners' skills.



Safeguarding learner-centred approaches and using individual plans for education, learning, training or transition both influence and are influenced by the correlation between labour market requirements and the learners' skills.

Finally, matching the learners' skills with the labour market skill requirements will increase learners' self-confidence, contribute to the correlation between work opportunities and learners' individual wishes and expectations and also contribute to successful VET and transition to the open labour market for learners with SEN/disabilities.

Recommendations

VET programmes/courses need to be reviewed periodically, both internally (e.g. by validating them against recent labour market analyses) and/or externally (e.g. national agencies) in order to adapt to current and future skill needs.

To achieve a match between labour market skills requirements and the learners' skills it is beneficial:

- to use innovative teaching methods and implement individualised and flexible curricula by focusing on learners' capabilities;
- to perform supervised practical training, offer supported employment models and provide follow-up activities to maintain learners' employment in companies.

5.3 Learners' pattern

5.3.1 Focusing on learners' capabilities

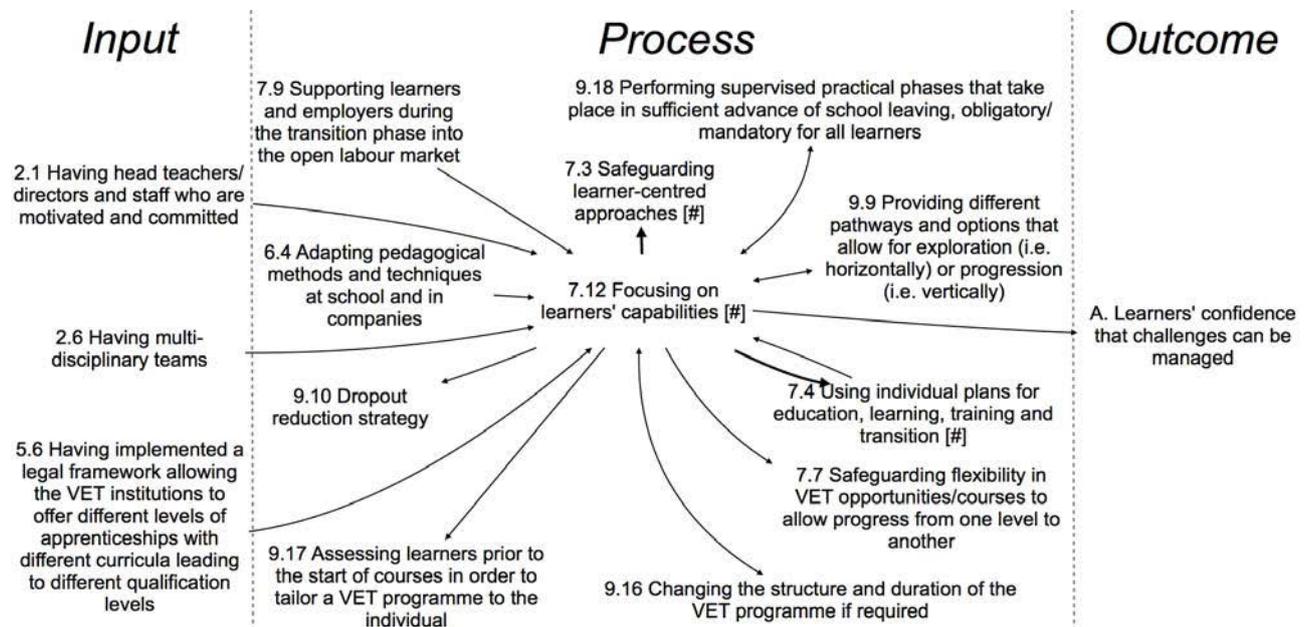


Figure 8 Focusing on learners' capabilities

Description

The focus on learners' capabilities is supported by having a legal framework in place that allows the VET institution to offer different levels of apprenticeships with different curricula, leading to different qualification levels, and having multi-disciplinary teams and motivated and committed leaders and staff.



The focus on learners' capabilities includes learner assessment prior to the start of courses in order to tailor a VET programme to the individual, the safeguarding of learner-centred approaches and the adaptation of pedagogical methods and techniques in schools and companies. It also has an impact on supporting learners and employers during the transition phase into the open labour market, on acting to prevent or reduce dropout and on safeguarding flexibility in VET opportunities/courses to allow progress from one level to another.

Several factors both influence and are influenced by the focus on learners' capabilities: changing the structure and duration of the VET programmes if required, providing different pathways and options that allow for exploration (i.e. horizontal) or progression (i.e. vertical), performing supervised practical phases that are obligatory for all learners and take place sufficiently in advance of school leaving, and using individual plans for education, learning, training or transition. A focus on learners' capabilities ultimately contributes to an increase in learners' confidence that the process's future challenges can be managed.

Recommendations

All staff need to put learners' abilities at the centre of their approaches and see opportunities rather than challenges. They should focus on what learners *can* do, not what they *cannot* do, and make all learners feel more confident and assertive.

Focusing on learners' capabilities benefits from:

- a legal framework that allows for a variety of apprenticeships, curricula and qualification levels and the ability to change the structure and duration of VET programmes;
- implementing different pathways in the programmes;
- having committed staff and multi-disciplinary teams which adapt pedagogical methods and techniques;
- using individual plans;
- providing supervised practical phases and supporting employers and learners throughout the transition phase.



5.3.2 Matching work opportunities and learners' individual wishes and expectations

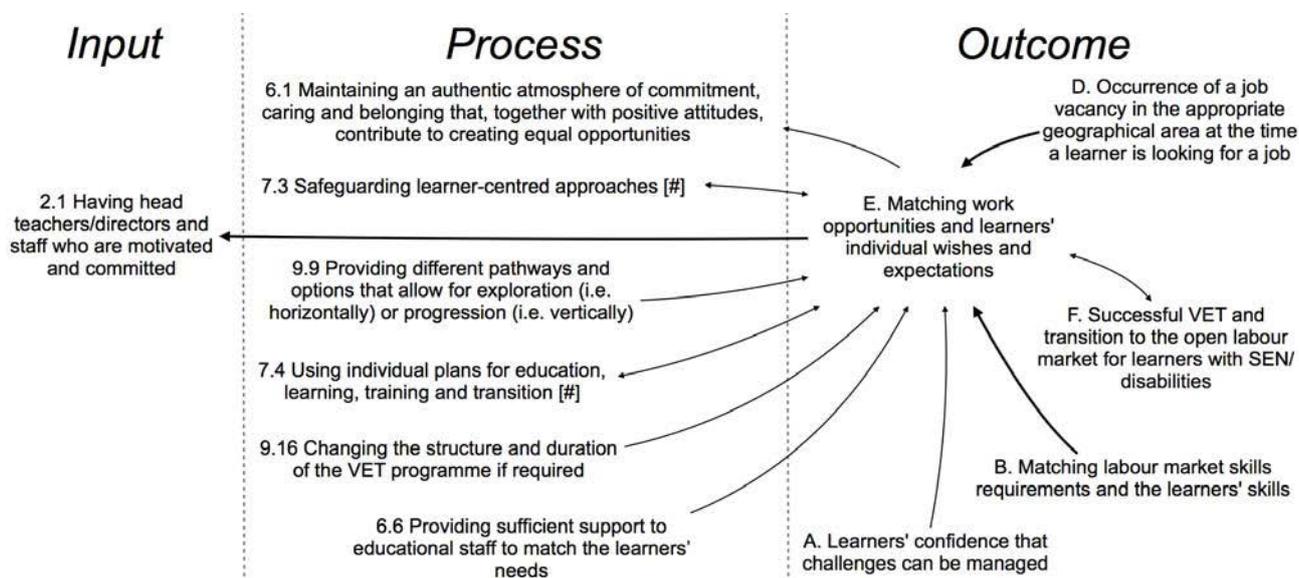


Figure 9 Matching work opportunities and learners' individual wishes and expectations

Description

The correlation between work opportunities and learners' individual wishes and expectations is a central outcome in the VET system. It is established by providing sufficient support to educational staff to meet learners' needs, changing the structure and duration of the VET programme if required and providing different pathways and options that allow for exploration (i.e. horizontal) or progression (i.e. vertical). Other outcome factors also impact on this correlation: a match between labour market skill requirements and the learners' skills, the learners' confidence that challenges can be managed and the occurrence of a job vacancy as a learner is looking for a job. Even the VET system's aim of successful VET and transition to the open labour market impacts on this factor.

The correlation between work opportunities and learners' individual wishes and expectations influences and is influenced by safeguarding learner-centred approaches and using individual plans. Matching work opportunities with learners' wishes and expectations also impacts on the motivation and commitment of leaders and staff and therefore on an authentic atmosphere of commitment, caring, belonging and positive attitudes that contribute to creating equal opportunities.

Recommendations

Success in VET and in the transition to the open labour market is unlikely if the learners' individual wishes and expectations are neglected. These wishes and expectations need to be respected and reflected in each step of the transition process.

To match work opportunities with learners' wishes and expectations, it is beneficial to:

- align programmes so that they address skills requirements that are currently or will soon be in demand on the regional labour market;
- maintain learner-centred approaches throughout all VET programmes, supported by using individual plans;
- provide real VET options for learners to choose from (e.g. different pathways,



qualification levels, programme durations);

- provide the required support to staff so that these options can be realised;
- raise learners' confidence that challenges in the whole process can be managed.

5.3.3 Having established co-operation structures with local companies for practical training and/or employment after graduation

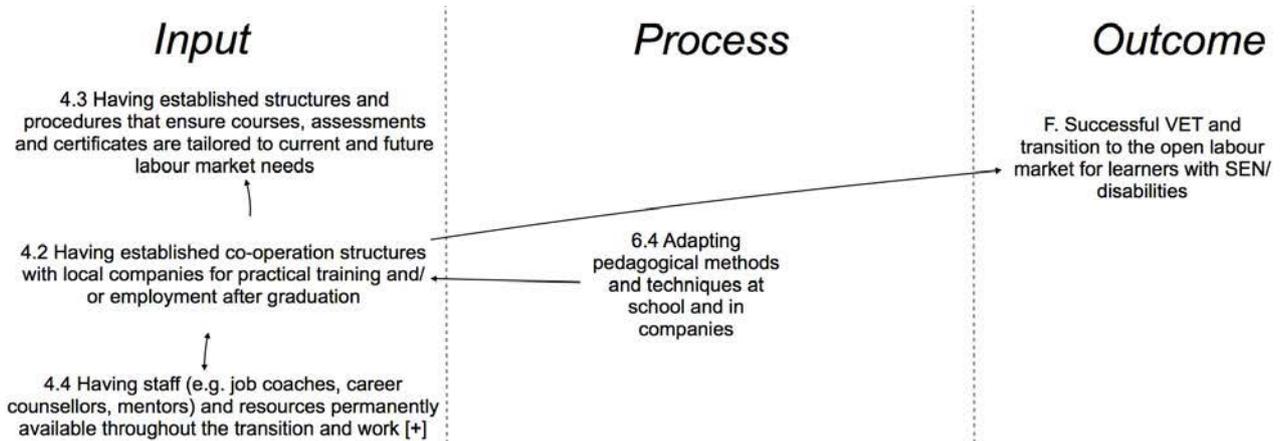


Figure 10 Having established co-operation structures with local companies for practical training and/or employment after graduation

Description

The establishment of co-operation structures with local companies for practical training and/or employment after graduation requires staff (e.g. job coaches, career counsellors, mentors, etc.) and resources to be permanently available throughout the transition and work. This factor is influenced by adapting pedagogical methods and techniques in schools and companies. These co-operation structures impact on the establishment of procedures that ensure that courses, assessments and certificates are tailored to current and future labour market needs and that they contribute to successful VET and transition to the open labour market for learners with SEN/disabilities.

Recommendations

The VET institution needs to develop partnerships and networking structures with a pool of local employers to ensure close co-operation with regard to learners' supervised practical training and finding employment after graduation.

These co-operation structures benefit from:

- adapting pedagogical methods/techniques in companies;
- having sufficient staff and resources that are permanently available throughout the transition and work.



5.4 Labour market pattern

5.4.1 Safeguarding connections with local employers/companies for practical training and job opportunities based upon trust and past experiences

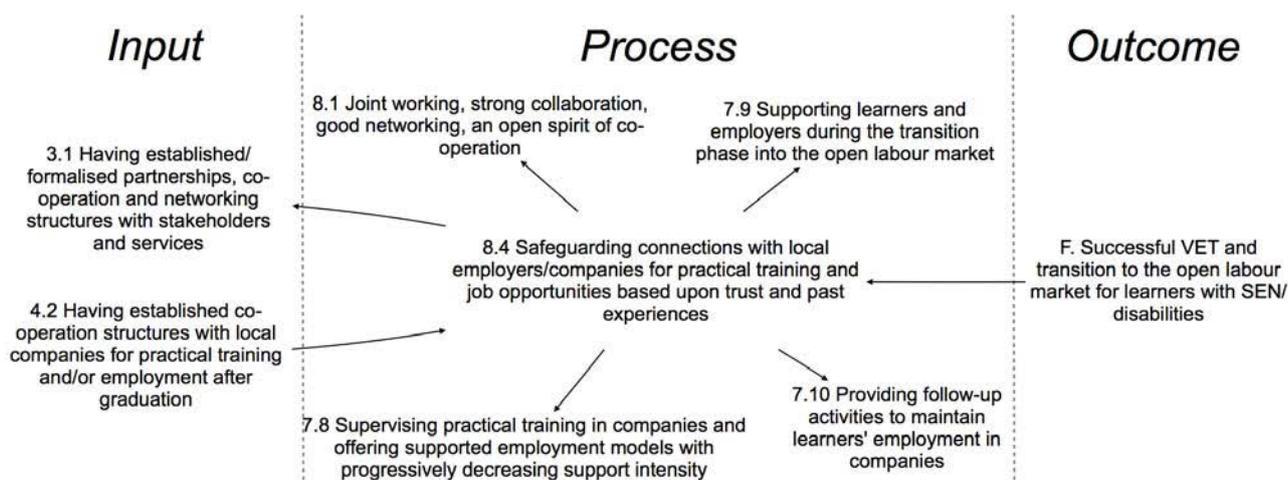


Figure 11 Safeguarding connections with local employers/companies for practical training and job opportunities based upon trust and past experiences

Description

In order to safeguard connections with local employers/companies based upon trust and past experience, co-operative structures must be established for practical training and/or employment after graduation. Positive experiences of successful VET and transition to the open labour market also contribute to and reinforce these connections and contribute to the establishment of formalised partnerships, co-operation and networking with stakeholders and services. Further factors relate to joint working, strong collaboration, good networking and an open spirit of co-operation regarding the provision of supervised practical training in companies, with support for learners and employers during the transition phase to the open labour market. These connections with employers also influence supported employment models that offer a gradual reduction in the intensity of support and the provision of follow-up activities to maintain learners' employment.

Recommendations

The school/VET institution needs to establish and maintain resilient connections with local employers over time. These connections are based upon the companies' growing confidence that they receive adequate support whenever they need it during the process.

Safeguarding connections with local employers benefits from:

- having formally established co-operation structures to be used for practical training and job opportunities;
- allowing sufficient time for positive experiences on both sides during practical training and successful transitions to be collected.



5.4.2 Supporting learners and employers during the transition phase into the open labour market

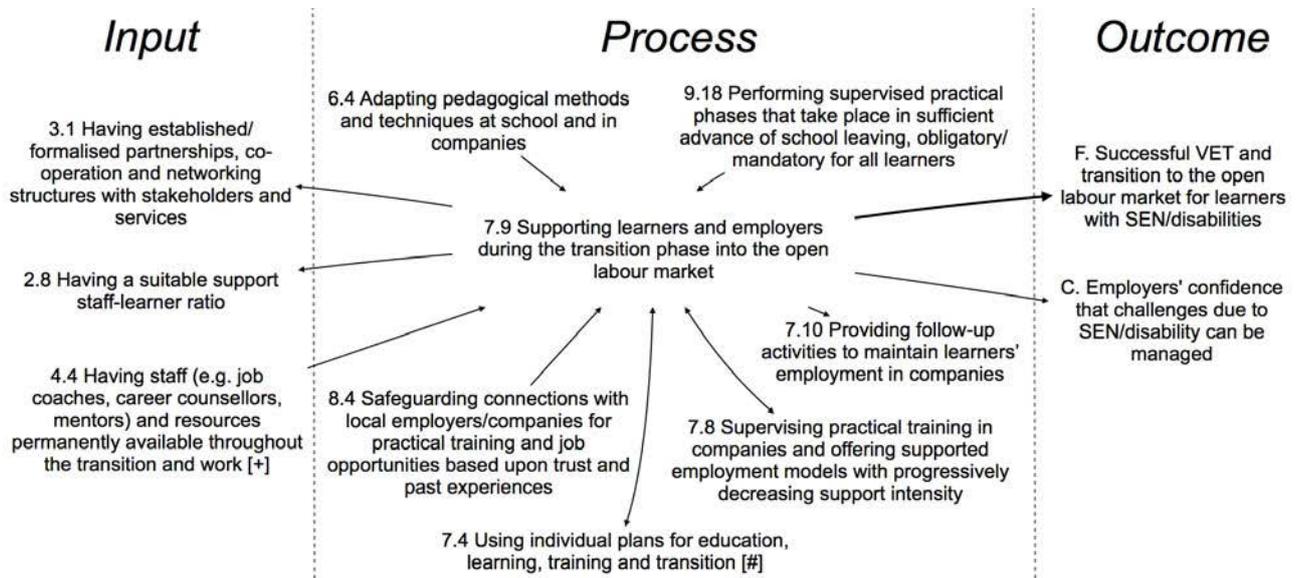


Figure 12 Supporting learners and employers during the transition phase into the open labour market

Description

Supporting learners and employers during the transition phase into the open labour market requires staff such as job coaches, career counsellors or mentors, and resources that are permanently available throughout the transition and into work.

The support of learners and companies is influenced by the adaptation of pedagogical methods and techniques, the provision of supervised practical training in companies sufficiently prior to school leaving and supported employment models that offer a gradual reduction in the intensity of support. Safeguarding connections with local employers/companies for practical training and job opportunities based upon trust and past experience is a further influencing factor.

In turn, the support of learners and employers contributes to the use of individual plans, the safeguarding of a suitable support staff–learner ratio, the establishment of formalised partnerships, co-operation and networking structures, and the provision of follow-up activities to maintain learners' employment in companies. Finally, support for learners contributes to their increased self-confidence and belief that challenges can be managed and ultimately to successful VET and transition to the open labour market for learners with SEN/disabilities.

Recommendations

The transition from education to employment needs to be backed up by adequate support during the transition phase. Career counsellors/officers need to inform learners about employment possibilities, support them with job applications, inform and support employers and facilitate contact between both parties.

To be able to adequately support learners and employers during the transition phase it is beneficial to:

- maintain good connections with local employers;



- offer practical training and supported employment models;
- have staff and resources available throughout the transition and into work;
- adapt pedagogical methods and techniques if required and implement individual plans.

5.4.3 Providing follow-up activities to maintain learners' employment in companies



Figure 13 Providing follow-up activities to maintain learners' employment in companies

Description

Providing follow-up activities to maintain learners' employment in companies requires staff and resources to be permanently available throughout the transition and into work. Adapted pedagogical methods and techniques at schools and companies and the use of individual plans are also required. Follow-up activities can build upon connections with local employers/companies for practical training and job opportunities, the provision of supervised practical training in companies and supported employment models that offer a gradual reduction in the intensity of support.

Follow-up activities contribute to the development of social skills and learners' well-being, the establishment of formalised partnerships, co-operation and networking structures with stakeholders and services, and the correlation between labour market skills requirements and the learners' skills. Finally, appropriate follow-up activities contribute to increasing the employers' confidence that challenges due to SEN/disability can be managed and to successful VET and transition to the open labour market for learners with SEN/disability.

Recommendations

In order to have a successful transition phase that leads to sustainable jobs in the open labour market, follow-up activities need to be undertaken by competent staff for as long as required, to meet the needs of young graduates and employers.

The provision of such follow-up activities is supported by:

- having sufficient staff and resources available throughout the transition and into work;



- maintaining good connections with local employers;
- performing practical training as well as offering supported employment models in their companies;
- adapting pedagogical methods/techniques suitable for maintaining learners' employment and using individual plans.



6. DISCUSSION

Discussion of other relevant factors

The following factors were also observed during study visits and, although they are not highly frequent and do not form part of an identified pattern, they are worthy of consideration. Some of the factors may have only been discussed during a single study visit, but were subsequently validated by the project experts at the final conference.

These factors complement success factors by shaping favourable conditions for successful VET or indicate areas that need further attention. The factors listed below should therefore also be considered in the context of implementing or maintaining successful VET for learners with SEN/disabilities.

Structural/input aspects

- VET should not focus exclusively on vocational inclusion, but should also **take account of social inclusion**. Failure to successfully manage social inclusion (which encompasses vocational inclusion) renders vocational inclusion unsustainable. Learners often experience a 'double transition': for example from school to work and from home or boarding school to independent living. Success in one transition can only be achieved by also ensuring success in the other. Programmes should therefore also ensure that learners progress with regard to independent living, citizenship, quality of relationships, leisure activities, etc.
- It is important to achieve the **right balance between the flexibility and the standardisation** of programmes and procedures. While too much flexibility can result in unpredictability and a reduction in the quality of provision, overly rigid standardisation may fail to address individual learners' needs.
- Establishing **bonds between learners and companies/employers** is another important aspect of safeguarding the transition from VET to the labour market. One particular approach to be mentioned in this context is to have apprenticeship contracts between companies and learners, with sufficient and fair remuneration that values learners' efforts and job performance, while at the same time allowing learners to live as independently as possible and to move where work is available (vocational mobility).
- Although some countries have a quota system that requires employers to hire a certain percentage of employees with disabilities, it is unclear to what extent these systems actually facilitate equal opportunities for workers with SEN. Instead of penalising employers that do not fulfil this quota, **employers** recommend placing a greater focus on their **needs for further** (not necessarily financial) **support**.
- Some countries mentioned their difficulties in providing **suitable in-service training** due to the low number of participants. In other visits, participants also questioned whether the opportunities in post-qualification match the practical needs of schools and teachers.
- Co-operation has been mentioned as a key factor. However, some countries commented on the challenges inherent in such approaches and highlighted the **need for the development of skills to effectively manage complex co-operation structures**. In some cases, new positions were created to deal exclusively with this task. In others, responsibility was shared among stakeholders, but sometimes without roles and respective responsibilities being clearly defined or



without requiring qualifications from candidates. It was also stressed that co-operation structures require time if they are to be developed appropriately.

- Some stakeholders also highlighted that the **co-existence of special and mainstream provisions** is not a contradiction, as both systems can support one another. In some cases, special provisions filled a gap where the labour market was not yet sufficiently inclusive or where, at least for a time, learners could receive more focused education and training, while mainstream provisions provided realistic work experience and training recognised by future employers.
- Both the teachers and service providers involved in some visits mentioned that a major drawback of policies is that they describe what inclusion is *not*, rather than what it *is*. A **clear definition or description of what is understood by inclusion** would be considered helpful.
- A few visits highlighted the fact that multi-disciplinary teamwork is difficult to achieve because of restrictive data protection laws that prohibit the sharing of learner-related data. A potential area for further investigation is the data protection regulations in those countries that have reached a **compromise between confidentiality concerns and the use of data** to improve provision and processes.
- While **teaching was considered a worthy profession** in a few countries, this was not true in others. In both cases, salaries were neither particularly low nor high in comparison with other professions. Where the teaching profession was highly valued, however, it seemed easier to attract skilled and motivated learners to train as teachers.
- Finally, the **particular relevance of the local level** was apparent in various visits. A focus on this level seems to help local policy actors feel more committed to ideas surrounding inclusion. It also assists in the establishment of formal or informal alliances between educational institutions and companies/administrations, e.g. through corporate social responsibility (CSR) activities or negotiated agreements.

Process aspects

- Reference was made to ensuring that **learners have an active role** in the whole learning process, including having real and individual choices and making decisions themselves wherever possible. This issue often creates challenges and opportunities for parents. It can be a difficult task for parents to find the right balance between over-protecting their children and over-estimating their children's skills while their children move through the transition from a dependent child/young person to an adult, with their own views on the future. Clear roles and procedures, with support available to parents, could be beneficial.
- It was also noted that some form of **knowledge management** for maintaining and further developing teachers' knowledge and experience is required. This could involve setting up systems for exchanging materials and resources and reporting on practices. The type of contracts given to teachers should also be considered so that they can support positive career perspectives (e.g. permanent contracts, career development, mentoring, teamwork).
- While the predominant strategy for the transition of learners with SEN/disabilities focuses on training and preparing these learners for jobs that are already available in the labour market, some countries referred to the alternative approach of



creating job opportunities. This refers to either developing alternative forms of employment (e.g. social enterprises, sheltered workshops) or identifying suitable tasks in companies and linking these tasks together to create a job for a learner with SEN/disabilities. This approach obviously depends on the skills of all the stakeholders involved, and this would need to be reflected in the qualifications on offer, as well as in appropriate structures and resources.

- Transitional phases are always problematic if the step from one stage (VET) to another (employment) is not smooth. As stakeholders in those stages belong to different systems (e.g. educational system and public or private sector), responsibilities are also often limited by the scope of the respective systems. An overlap (e.g. by giving employers 'access' to the educational system or by giving the educational system 'access' to real working environments) would require **people and services to bridge the gap** by facilitating co-operation between the systems and ensuring a smooth transition for the learners.
- Finally, it was observed that very few educational institutions, service providers or administrative bodies could provide data on outcomes with regard to VET for learners with SEN/disabilities. (The differences between *outcome*, *output*, *effect* and *impact* are explained in greater detail below.) In most instances, quantitative data on outputs was available with little information on effects or impact. Quality assurance should therefore seek to focus on **outcome orientation**, as this is the main indicator of whether the VET system and the labour market at the practical level achieve what is set out at the policy level.

Proposals regarding suitable result categories

Results are generally understood to be the product of designing and utilising particular structures/inputs and processes. The patterns discussed above contain recommendations relating to particular structure/input and process factors. Furthermore, it is necessary to put forward some proposals in order to address two key questions:

- Which types of results are of relevance?
- How can results be best used to increase understanding of areas for further structure/input and process improvements?

The VET project was not devised with the intention of gathering extensive qualitative or quantitative data as a form of evidence that a study visit example was 'successful', nor was the selection of the examples based on the criterion of representativeness. It was nevertheless striking that few examples were able to present results other than basic quantitative data relating to students' participation in courses, their completion of courses or their finding employment within a certain timeframe. Many policies set high goals, such as improving the quality of life of people with SEN/disabilities and achieving full inclusion and equal opportunities. However, the means of assessing the achievement of these aims in practice are often very basic and cannot adequately address these complex concepts.

The complexity inherent in developing suitable indicators for such concepts has been covered in another Agency project⁷ and therefore will not be discussed in detail here. For

⁷ European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education (ed.), 2009. *Development of a set of indicators – for inclusive education in Europe*. Odense and European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education (ed.), 2011. *Participation in Inclusive Education – A Framework for Developing Indicators*. Odense.



the purposes of this report, however, suggestions can be made regarding the selection of particular results from suitable result categories outlined below.

The VET project was carried out in the context of difficult economic circumstances in Europe that affected most of the countries visited. This highlights that a project such as this one can identify areas for improvement and recommend further developments, but must still be mindful of external factors over which it can have no direct influence. Therefore, the project participants refrained from defining 'successful' in the context of the project in terms of what would usually be considered the most appropriate indicator: the transition rate of people with SEN/disabilities from education into employment. The transition rate would be expected to decrease as a result of difficult economic circumstances. Instead, the project employed a wider definition of results and focused its analyses on the structural/input and process factors of each country example.

The results observed in these visits have been organised into four categories, outlined below, in order to highlight particular aspects that may assist in identifying or recognising success in any given example.

- *Outputs* refer, for example, to numbers like the amount of VET course offers, numbers of programme participants or graduates.
- *Effects* can refer to changes observed in learners (e.g. increase in soft skills, change in attitude, increase in self-confidence), transition rates in general (e.g. into employment on the open labour market, into further educational pathways or into sheltered employment), transition rates into companies where practical training was previously carried out, dropout rates (and variations in these rates as a result of programmes or new structures) or changes in employers' attitudes.
- *Impact* refers to the learners' perception, i.e. changes observed by learners. This may include their level of satisfaction with the school, programme or teachers, their perceived independence, self-esteem or self-confidence, and a feeling of being more stable, mature or proud of their achievements.
- *Outcomes* refer to wider societal benefits associated with the example, such as an increase in a learner's quality of life, less dependence on social welfare and changes in society's attitudes.

On the basis of this categorisation, the following proposals can be given for the selection of suitable result types:

- Data on outputs is usually easily obtainable, as it is mostly quantitative and often already available from administrative or financial departments. Output data is of relevance for managing an organisation, e.g. in providing an overview of current organisational efficiency (provided that information is always up-to-date). Mismanaged organisations will most probably not be able to deliver high-quality vocational education and training in the long term. It is proposed that a **suitable set of output-related data be selected to support the management of an organisation.**
- Data on effects is a valuable source of information for improving organisational strategies where these strategies are linked to strategic goals. For example, a strategic goal could be to improve connections with the local economy in order to increase employment opportunities for learners with SEN/disabilities. The implementation strategy might involve carrying out practical phases in local companies. The collection of data on, for example, the percentage of learners who



went on to sign an employment contract with these companies would provide a suitable indicator to assess the strategy's effectiveness. It is proposed that **suitable effect indicators be developed for each strategic goal and that goals be quantified in order to make their achievement verifiable** by means of these indicators.

- Learners are at the centre of all VET approaches and should be given an active role in shaping settings and services to ensure that they meet their individual needs. In this respect, data on the impact of VET services is crucial to understanding the learners' perception of effects and their level of satisfaction with the provision. It is proposed that **accessible tools** (e.g. surveys, interviews) **be developed**, with a view to **regularly determining learners' perceptions** throughout the whole service lifecycle – from admission until transition and possibly beyond.
- Outcomes become visible at later stages following the implementation of services and it is often difficult to conclusively attribute them completely or principally to the existence or performance of the service. Nevertheless, outcomes allow for verification of the extent to which the policy aims have been reached, for example through a particular VET provision. It is proposed that **outcomes be periodically explored, e.g. through case studies or focused research**, in order to assess whether the organisation still fulfils its overall purpose.

Proposals regarding the use of results

Results are *the* key source of information for determining whether structures/inputs or processes of sufficient quality are being implemented. First and foremost, results must be *utilised* to continuously improve settings and procedures. Their use for publicity or other purposes should be secondary to this. VET organisations need to **establish and maintain a monitoring loop**, whereby key results, in all their forms, can be regularly collected, interpreted and used to determine the improvements to be made with regard to both structures/input and processes.

However, the type of result data required by a manager, for example, would differ to that required by a teacher. It is therefore essential to **provide all stakeholders with results that are meaningful for their particular tasks**. In order to achieve this, it could be worthwhile involving stakeholders in the initial phase of identifying or developing suitable data and indicators.

Ideally, all **stakeholders** who collect data or are **involved in data collection** (e.g. as an interviewee) would **have access to the results and be involved in their interpretation**.

It should be noted, however, that the collection of meaningful data is always accompanied by additional efforts; organisations should undertake a **cost-benefit analysis** in order to determine the required – and the acceptable – level of data collection.

Finally, it was mentioned in a few study visits that data privacy protection laws make it impossible to collect data, for example, once the learners have left the organisation. In some countries, however, appropriate anonymisation and data aggregation strategies have allowed for the collection of meaningful data while respecting the privacy of the people to whom it relates. It is proposed that the **essential results on which data is required be identified, where such data is necessary for improvements to the VET system at different levels**. It is also recommended that **clear rules be developed** by policy makers on the various levels, including data protection experts, for the anonymisation, aggregation and use of the collected data.

ANNEX 1 LIST OF EXPERTS

Country	Expert's name
Austria	Mr Dietmar Vollmann Ms Ursula Ortner
Belgium (Flemish speaking community)	Ms Inge Placklé Mr Thierry Jongen
Cyprus	Ms Maria Evripidou Mr Kostas Pistos
Czech Republic	Ms Vera Kovaříková Ms Lucie Procházková
Denmark	Mr Henrik Hedelund Ms Pia Cort
Estonia	Ms Meeli Murasov Ms Aile Nõupuu Ms Mari Tikerpuu
Finland	Ms Kaija Suorsa-Aarnio Ms Tarja Mänty
France	Mr Serge Ebersold Mr Rémy Leblanc
Germany	Mr Ulrich Krause Ms Margit Theis-Scholz
Greece	Mr Anastasios Asvestas Ms Chrysoula Stergiou
Hungary	Ms Katalin Simon
Iceland	Ms Ragnheiður Bóasdóttir Ms Thordis Olafsdóttir
Ireland	Mr Fionnbarra O'Murchu Ms Emer Ring Mr Rory O'Sullivan
Latvia	Ms Tatjana Truscelova-Danilova Ms Ilva Berzina
Lithuania	Ms Liuda Radzeviciene Ms Egle Zybartiene
Luxembourg	Mr Fernand Sauer Ms Marie-Paule Muller
Malta	Mr Vincent Borg Ms Maria Ciappara
Netherlands	Mr Freerk Steendam Mr Jeroen Stok
Norway	Ms Liv Frilseth Mr Bjørn Baugstø
Poland	Mr Witold Cyron
Portugal	Mr Luis Capucha Mr Edgar Pereira Mr Pedro Mateira



Slovenia	Ms Bernarda Kokalj Ms Frančiška Al-Mansour
Spain	Ms María Eugenia Caldas Ms Amparo Marzal
Sweden	Ms Marie Törn Ms Eva Valtersson
Switzerland	Ms Susanne Aeschbach Ms Myriam Jost-Hurni Mr Rene Stalder
United Kingdom (England)	Ms Linda Jordan Ms Sharon Gould
United Kingdom (Northern Ireland)	Ms Shirley Jones
United Kingdom (Wales)	Mr Stephen Beyer

Project Advisory Group	Mr Preben Siersbaek (Denmark) Ms Lucie Bauer (Austria) Mr Berthold van Leeuwen (the Netherlands) Ms Regina Labiniene (Lithuania) Ms Anabel Corral Granados (Agency) Ms Victoria Soriano (Agency) Ms Mary Kyriazopoulou (Agency) Mr Harald Weber (Agency)
Senior external experts	Ms Maria Hrabinska (Cedefop) Mr Serge Ebersold (INSHEA)



ANNEX 2 LIST OF ALL INPUT, STRUCTURE AND PROCESS FACTORS

All the factors identified during the study visits are listed in this Annex. The explanations (provided below each factor) are based exclusively on the visits and the experts' view of the examples. The factors do not refer to theoretical concepts, but rather to observations made in some or all of the 26 participating countries. The numbering of the factors will assist in identifying the factors more easily in this report. Factors observed in many of the study visits that became part of the VET system model are marked with an asterisk (*).

- 1 *Having high-quality infrastructure (e.g. building, transport, teaching and training materials)*
The physical environment of the school/VET setting and the companies where learners carry out their practical training has been adapted to the needs of people with SEN/disabilities. High-quality equipment and training materials (up-to-date technology, use of IT) are available.
- 2.1 *Having head teachers/directors and staff who are motivated and committed**
Head teachers/directors and staff are highly motivated, committed, dedicated and sometimes open in expressing their enthusiasm.
- 2.2 *Having a school director with effective leadership**
Leadership from the school director is effective and both appreciated and respected. Distributive leadership is visible and works well.
- 2.3 *Having highly qualified teachers, staff and support personnel**
Staff are highly qualified, i.e. they have formal university-level qualifications, a vocational qualification and/or industry-based experience, with on-going/in-service or further training possibilities and human resources/professional development.
- 2.4 *Having teachers qualified in SEN pedagogy*
Teachers are qualified to teach learners with SEN/disabilities, in addition to having a formal qualification in specific subjects/technical vocations.
- 2.5 *Having further training/education opportunities for all staff, including teachers**
On-going/in-service or further training opportunities are offered to all educational and support staff, including teachers.
- 2.6 *Having multi-disciplinary teams**
Multi-disciplinary teams are set up to include professionals such as teachers, trainers, social workers, psychologists, occupational therapists and support staff.
- 2.7 *Having a suitable teacher–learner ratio**
Small class sizes are used because they are positive for learning. There are additional staff in the classroom, besides the class teacher, where necessary.
- 2.8 *Having a suitable support staff–learner ratio**
Sufficient support staff are available, co-ordinated at school level, to provide a broad range of support, e.g. assistants, carers and managers, as well as professionals who assist and support learners during their practical training in the workplace.
- 2.9 *Having staff with labour market experience*
Staff that work in the school/VET setting have previous work experience in companies, industries, etc.
- 2.10 *Having continuity of staff/low turnover rate*
A stable and permanent team of staff with a low turnover rate helps to build



sustainable networks and connections to employers.

- 3.1 *Having established/formalised partnerships, co-operation and networking structures with stakeholders and services**

Partnerships are established/formalised and co-ordinated (as opposed to ad-hoc, co-incident and fully dependent on contact between a few individuals). There are co-operation and networking structures with stakeholders and services, including employment services, financial providers, youth guidance centres, youth care, local community, voluntary organisations, etc.
- 3.2 *Having collaboration/co-ordination/partnership structures between the VET institution, ministries and employers (national/local level)*

A co-ordination service/unit operates: at ministry level to co-ordinate the school/VET setting with the ministry and employers (e.g. by providing job coaching support); at municipality level to monitor and co-ordinate activities; and at the school/VET setting level to co-operate with, for example, a Vocational Training Board for practical training.
- 3.3 *Having a formal and strong co-operation strategy between VET institutions and parents, including parent participation**

There is a strategy to encourage parents' active involvement in their children's learning process, based upon formal co-operation and dialogue with parents as equal partners, to ensure that parents have a say in which company their child attends.
- 3.4 *Having collaboration structures between special and mainstream VET schools (e.g. special teachers teaching/supporting teachers in mainstream, mutual activities)*

Special VET schools and mainstream VET schools collaborate with each other and with training organisations to provide VET for learners with SEN/disabilities, e.g. through special teachers teaching/supporting mainstream teachers or vice versa.
- 3.5 *Having established collaboration structures among VET services, support services and ministries at national level*

Co-operation and partnership between service providers and different ministries concerned with feedback on policy development at national level is established.
- 4.1 *Having pre-vocational preparation at school*

Pre-vocational programmes are available at lower-secondary school level.
- 4.2 *Having established co-operation structures with local companies for practical training and/or employment after graduation**

There is a networking structure with a pool of employers for close co-operation with regard to learners' practical training and finding employment after graduation.
- 4.3 *Having established structures and procedures that ensure courses, assessments and certificates are tailored to current and future labour market needs**

VET programmes/courses are reviewed periodically, both internally (e.g. by validating them against recent labour market analyses) and/or externally (e.g. national agencies) in order to adapt to future skills needs. This potentially entails the involvement of labour market representatives in school procedures (e.g. examinations) and/or structures (e.g. school boards).
- 4.4 *Having staff (e.g. job coaches, career counsellors, mentors) and resources permanently available throughout the transition and work**

Formal job coaching programmes, career guidance or support services, including after-care and preparation of employers, are permanently available for learners with



SEN/disabilities searching for a job in the open labour market and when they first find employment.

4.5 *Having financial compensation available to employers on a permanent basis, i.e. as long as necessary, to account for the reduced work ability of employees with SEN/disability*

Financial compensation is permanently available, e.g. through wage subsidies by national or local authorities.

4.6 *Having special systems that lead learners (at least temporarily) back to mainstream systems to avoid permanent tracking*

Learners with SEN/disabilities are led by the special system back to mainstream at certain points (e.g. the labour agency assesses their readiness for apprenticeship or their need for a pre-vocational course), to avoid being permanently fixed in one educational track.

5.1 *Having implemented a national/federal legal framework on inclusive education in secondary/upper-secondary education**

A national/federal legal framework on inclusive education in secondary/upper-secondary education has been implemented with: national goals on inclusive education; provisions relating to learners with SEN/disabilities; decentralisation of responsibilities (regional, local level); more learner-centred approaches and flexibility to deal with diversity and learners with SEN/disability across the country.

5.2 *Having implemented a system that ensures the right of learners with SEN/disability who cannot follow mainstream upper-secondary/VET education to tailor-made or special upper-secondary education (legal framework on 'education for all')*

Policies developed on the basis of 'education for all' give learners with SEN/disabilities (who cannot follow mainstream upper-secondary/VET education) the right to tailor-made or special upper-secondary/VET education.

5.3 *Having implemented a legal framework on disability that ensures civil rights and delegation of respective responsibilities to local and regional level, allowing innovation and co-operation between the relevant stakeholders in VET*

The legal framework on disability, equal opportunities and/or anti-discrimination ensures civil rights (with regard to employment, education, accessibility, citizenship, etc.) and delegation of respective responsibilities to local and regional level, allowing innovation and co-operation between the relevant stakeholders in VET.

5.4 *Having implemented a legal framework on employment for people with SEN/disabilities (directive, national strategy) in which the inclusion of learners with SEN/disabilities in the labour market is the priority to ensure: emphasis on support for the employment of people with SEN/disabilities; focus on stakeholder co-operation; active policies to promote employment at local level*

Policy gives priority to the inclusion of learners with SEN/disabilities in the open labour market with an emphasis on additional support; active policies promote employment at the local level; policy promotes the link between VET, practical training of learners in companies and support for employment after graduation.

5.5 *Having implemented a legal framework for required support to schools (that take learners with SEN/disabilities) and/or to learners and parents**

Policy provides for adequate support (e.g. additional funding, higher staff–learner ratios, support staff, multi-disciplinary teams, adapted educational materials, school companions, tax relief, access to support services, etc.) to schools that take learners



with SEN/disabilities and to learners with SEN/disabilities and their parents.

5.6 *Having implemented a legal framework allowing the VET institutions to offer different levels of apprenticeships with different curricula, leading to different qualification levels**

Flexibility in policy allows the VET settings to offer different levels of VET programmes with different curricula, leading to different qualification levels, in order to respond to individual needs. This includes opportunities to switch between prolonged and reduced versions of apprenticeships and/or to a different VET programme.

6.1 *Maintaining an authentic atmosphere of commitment, caring and belonging that, together with positive attitudes, contribute to the creation of equal opportunities**

Staff believe in learners' abilities and see opportunities rather than challenges. Their aim is to make all learners feel more confident and assertive in what they do. They empower the learners in order to raise their self-esteem and develop their personalities.

6.2 *Safeguarding the positive effects of multi-disciplinary teams and of co-ordinated teamwork**

Multi-disciplinary teams have clear roles (teachers, physiotherapists, psychologists, school counsellors, speech therapists, trainers, career guidance, etc.) and a teamwork approach and co-operate with a high level of internal communication (peer coaching, informal discussions, collaborative problem solving, etc.) and external communication with other services.

6.3 *Offering further training opportunities and staff development to ensure quality in education**

The VET setting offers in-service training for all teachers and support staff in an on-going process in the context of professional development, including peer teaching, seminars on SEN, subject-based seminars, etc.

6.4 *Adapting pedagogical methods and techniques at school and in companies**

Teachers/trainers are able to adapt their pedagogical methods to match the employers' needs and have enough resources for innovative individual work and support.

6.5 *Staff maintaining contacts with companies for practical training and jobs*

Staff build good relationships and networks with employers at local level for learners' practical training and finding employment after graduation.

6.6 *Providing sufficient support to educational staff to match the learners' needs**

Sufficient methodological, technical and psychological support is provided to educational staff to adapt the curriculum and materials to learners with SEN/disabilities.

7.1 *Maintaining a good balance between theoretical/academic subjects and practical training**

The VET programmes provide a good balance between theoretical/academic subjects and practical training/learning-through-doing.

7.2 *Focusing on hands-on/practical/life-like learning approaches that also include theoretical/academic subjects**

The focus is on learning-through-doing/learning-on-the-job approaches (as opposed to theoretical approaches), with core subjects integrated into projects.



- 7.3 *Safeguarding learner-centred approaches**
A learner-centred approach tailors pedagogical methods and materials, the curriculum, assessment methods and goals, etc., to individual needs.
- 7.4 *Using individual plans for education, learning, training and transition**
Individual curricula, individual education/learning/training plans, individual transition plans, etc., are developed and implemented.
- 7.5 *Accounting for the development of social skills and well-being**
Appropriate attention is given to the development of social skills and well-being, e.g. personal and social skills, rights, duties of citizenship, activities of daily living (ADL).
- 7.6 *Using innovative teaching methods and approaches**
Innovative teaching methods and approaches are implemented, e.g. peer learning, role-plays, learning through authentic tasks, using games for certain topics (e.g. maths).
- 7.7 *Safeguarding flexibility in VET opportunities/courses to allow progress from one level to another**
There is flexibility in VET opportunities/courses, so that learners can start in a lower level programme and move to a higher level programme either before or after graduation.
- 7.8 *Supervising practical training in companies and offering supported employment models with progressively decreasing support intensity**
Learners are assisted/supported by staff (teachers, trainers, assistants, job coaches, mentors, etc.), both during their practical training in companies and also after graduation. Young people who have found a paid job are supported at work by job coaches/assistants through the supported employment model, with a progressive decrease in support intensity.
- 7.9 *Supporting learners and employers during the transition phase into the open labour market**
Career counsellors/officers inform and guide learners regarding employment possibilities, facilitate and support contact with employers, provide support with job applications, provide information and support to employers and provide additional support needed by young people, etc.
- 7.10 *Providing follow-up activities to maintain learners' employment in companies**
Follow-up support activities address the needs of young people and employers in order to maintain a learner's employment once they find it.
- 7.11 *Offering vocational training (courses, programmes and work experience) that involves real work with real customers/clients*
Work is carried out in the VET programme on clients' orders, etc., with real contact with clients and customers.
- 7.12 *Focusing on learners' capabilities**
Learners with SEN/disabilities are empowered, focusing on their abilities: what they *can* do, NOT what they *cannot* do. This is based upon the strong belief of both learners and teachers in the learners' strengths and possibilities, as a means of increasing self-esteem and self-confidence.
- 8.1 *Joint working, strong collaboration, good networking, an open spirit of co-operation**
There is good networking and collaboration with different stakeholders at local level, including: municipality, employment service, support services, chambers of



commerce, non-governmental organisations, voluntary organisations, parents, trade unions, etc.

- 8.2 *Exchanging and co-operating with parents on an equal footing**
Good links exist and parents are actively involved as equal partners.
- 8.3 *Showing positive attitudes of stakeholders and learners/teachers**
Employers have positive experiences with the trainees and employees with SEN/disabilities; parents have positive experiences with the VET and employment providers; learners are satisfied with and conscious of the support they receive; funding providers recognise value for money.
- 8.4 *Safeguarding connections with local employers/companies for practical training and job opportunities based upon trust and past experiences**
Resilient (i.e. long-standing, well-established and stable) connections result in a high percentage of learners obtaining a job with the company in which they carried out their practical training, because the companies feel confident from past experience that they can receive the required support.
- 9.1 *Developing a differentiated range of qualification levels*
Different VET programmes and certificates are available, targeting the acquisition of different skills and competences, with options for accreditation of achievement of individually defined goals.
- 9.2 *Compiling portfolios and awarding certificates/documents on achievements and skills**
Documents/portfolios are kept on the skills and achievements and sometimes also on the support required in the workplace.
- 9.3 *Awarding the same certificates as for non-SEN/non-disabled peers*
Learners receive an equivalent education; certificates are the same as for non-SEN/non-disabled peers, even if the duration was longer or additional help was granted.
- 9.4 *Certifying work- and life-related skills in addition to official certificates*
Different levels of certificates can be achieved by individual learners, with the support and acknowledgement of local employers.
- 9.5 *Developing and implementing individualised and flexible curricula**
A flexible approach allows for the development and implementation of individual curricula.
- 9.6 *Implementing reverse inclusion*
VET courses and services and the VET centre's facilities are open to non-SEN/non-disabled peers.
- 9.7 *Focusing on needs-based instead of diagnosis-based provision*
Special needs are defined in a flexible and open way and provision is based upon particular needs (e.g. reducing dropout).
- 9.8 *Strength-based co-operation between mainstream and special provision*
Special schools and mainstream schools collaborate and support each other to reduce dropouts.
- 9.9 *Providing different pathways and options that allow for exploration (i.e. horizontal) or progression (i.e. vertical)**
There are: options to improve a qualification, but also to improve grades;



opportunities for learners to change their mind and to switch to a different programme; options to choose between different professions and to have an academic and/or professional certificate; options to make use of an adapted curriculum.

9.10 *Dropout reduction strategy**

The school takes preventive educational action against dropouts in close co-operation with the local social services and develops measures so that dropouts find new alternatives.

9.11 *Committing all stakeholders to quality assurance and improvement strategies**

Programmes are implemented and certified to improve VET quality and continuously improve learners' preparation for the real labour market.

9.12 *Ensuring that learners, families and all other stakeholders are aware of and understand learning possibilities*

Information on learning possibilities is effectively presented and disseminated, e.g. by providing easy-to-understand information sheets with various internet links to job portals, information on finding other opportunities and key dates for the year.

9.13 *Ensuring that schools have clear inclusive policies in practice*

Equality is an integral part of practice and can be observed in the interaction between teachers and learners, based upon a clear inclusive policy at school level with strategies for implementation and monitoring of progress.

9.14 *Implementing a no-risk policy/return policy*

Learners can return to the VET setting if their experiences of work do not go as hoped (no-risk policy).

9.15 *Implementing policies in each school equally*

National policy regarding VET quality is implemented equally in each school.

9.16 *Changing the structure and duration of the VET programme if required**

The VET setting is flexible, ensuring that the structure and duration of the VET programmes respond to learners' needs, e.g. via an extension of the course duration, longer internships in preparatory classes, an emphasis on practical courses rather than theoretical courses, etc.

9.17 *Assessing learners prior to the start of courses in order to tailor a VET programme to the individual**

Learners take part in assessment schemes prior to starting the VET programme so that the most appropriate VET programme is selected, which matches learners' abilities and wishes.

9.18 *Supervised practical phases that take place sufficiently in advance of school leaving are obligatory/mandatory for all learners**

All learners take part in obligatory/mandatory and supervised exposure to work; short practical training in the open labour market; long-lasting (e.g. 24 weeks) practical training to check their capabilities and establish connections with future employers.



ANNEX 3 OVERVIEW OF FACTORS IN EACH OF THE FOUR PATTERNS

Factor	VET institution management pattern	Vocational education and training pattern	Learners' pattern	Labour market pattern
2.1	X		X	
2.2	X			
2.3	X		X	X
2.5	X			
2.6	X		X	
2.7	X	X	X	
2.8	X	X	X	X
3.1				X
3.3			X	X
4.2			X	X
4.3			X	X
4.4	X	X	X	X
5.1	X	X		
5.5	X	X	X	
5.6	X	X	X	X
6.1		X	X	
6.2	X	X		
6.3	X			
6.4		X	X	X
6.6	X	X	X	
7.1		X	X	X
7.2		X	X	X
7.3	X	X	X	
7.4	X	X	X	X
7.5		X	X	X
7.6		X		
7.7	X	X	X	
7.8		X	X	X
7.9	X	X	X	X
7.10		X	X	X
7.12		X	X	
8.1				X
8.2			X	
8.3		X		
8.4				X
9.2	X		X	X
9.5	X	X		
9.9	X		X	
9.10		X	X	
9.11	X			
9.16	X		X	
9.17	X		X	
9.18		X	X	X
A.		X	X	
B.	X	X	X	X
C.				X
D.			X	X
E.		X	X	
F.	X	X	X	X

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