

EUCLASS ALLIANCE

Studying EU Citizenship Education in VET Settings

WP2.1 National Desk Research Report - Finland

1. Introduction

This report showcases how EU citizenship teaching could be integrated to the VET education in Finland. In addition, this report examines how EU citizenship as a theme is not visible in the current curriculum in Vocational education.

Civic education has strong roots relaying in the Finnish basic education. In basic education civic education is described in large frame. Civic education in basic education is seen as a means to support students' growth into humanity, striving for truth, goodness, justice, and peace. It includes the ability to deal with contradictions ethically and compassionately, and the courage to stand up for good. Civic education also emphasizes the importance of ethical reflection, putting oneself in others' positions, and making knowledge-based decisions. It promotes well-being, democracy, and active participation in civil society, guiding students to respect life and human rights, and to defend human dignity. The goal of equality and the broad principle of equality guide the development of basic education, contributing to economic, social, regional, and gender equality. When moving forward into high school, or vocational training it is expected that these competencies are already required.

Finnish Vocational education has long roots on practical and aiming to reach the labor market after studies. The Finnish vocational education and training (VET) system is designed to be work-based and competence-oriented. This means that students' prior learning is recognized, and they only need to acquire the missing competences during their studies. The system allows students to flexibly use qualification units and sets that are smaller than a qualification unit to meet their needs. VET system in Finland ensures that everyone completes at least an upper secondary qualification and supports lifelong learning.

Moreover, VET in Finland is closely aligned with the needs of the working life. It provides students with strong vocational competence and continuously updates their skills to match the changing demands of the job market.

Finnish VET studies are flexible and individual based. A personal competence development plan is created for each student, recognizing their prior learning and outlining the competences they need to acquire in various learning environments.

The Finnish VET system is based on trust and shared responsibility. The network of VET providers plays a key role in implementing and ensuring the quality of training and qualifications. Parliament decides on legislation and annual budget allocations, while the

Government sets the development agenda and the structure of vocational qualifications. The Ministry of Education and Culture drafts legislation, guides, regulates, finances, and monitors the sector. The Finnish National Agency for Education (EDUFI) creates national qualification requirements and funds projects to develop education and training. The VET funding system rewards providers based on outcomes, efficiency, and effectiveness, with funding provided directly to VET providers.

In Finland, local autonomy in education is extensive, and there is no inspection system in place. Education providers are responsible for the quality of their own operations and can decide on the quality assurance system they choose to employ. The quality assurance of VET consists of the quality management systems of education providers, national steering and regulation, and external evaluation. The legislation regulating VET requires education providers to evaluate the qualifications, education, and other activities they provide, as well as their quality and effectiveness. Education providers must also regularly participate in external evaluation of their activities and quality management systems.

Legally the frame for VET studies is based on the Act on Vocational Education and Training (531/2017). In the content of the law also has emphasis on the professional skills, functional capacity but we can see mentioning of the citizenship for acting as a member of the society. Vocational training relies strongly on the basic education where the civic education is strongly addressed.

According to the Act of Vocational Education and Training (531/2017) Vocational education in Finland aims to increase and maintain vocational competence in the population, provide opportunities for demonstrating vocational competence however acquired and support lifelong learning and professional growth.

Furthermore, the objectives of the vocational education and training referred to in this Act are to help students grow into decent, well-rounded and educated human beings and members of society and also to provide them with the knowledge and skills required for engaging in further studies, occupational development and leisure activities as well as to further their versatile personal development.

2. Background research

2.1 Materials and methods

Research Questions

- What national policies/frameworks support the teaching of EU Citizenship in VET settings?
- What gaps or barriers exist in these policies?

- How do current teaching methodologies and resources affect the inclusion of EU Citizenship topics in VET curricula?
- What challenges do VET educators face in teaching EU Citizenship, and what support mechanisms are available?
- What insights can be drawn from national studies or practices on teaching EU Citizenship in VET schools?
- Is teacher training inclusive of EU Citizenship Education and how flexible are curricula in addressing these topics?

2.2. Development of the desk research

This desk research used a systematic approach to collect insights and best practices. First steps taken to the research were interviewing the teachers, international coordinator and a head of studies professional to target how the EU theme is visible and highlighted in practice but mainly also in the Finnish VET curricula.

Parallel to the interviews, information was gathered from reliable online sources.

2.3 Analysis of National EU citizenship education in VET Sector

EU citizenship topics are not highlighted in the Finnish VET curricula, but many bridges and related themes can be recognised. The interviews conducted support this finding, teachers recognised the importance of the topic but address that what is not strictly said in the curricula is not recursed to be structurally taught. The teachers addressed the lack of resources in time and material, mentioning also that ready made teaching package would help them to address the matter in classroom. VET teaching focusing more on the practical skills is lacking the European civic education angle, since the actioning in Finnish society and an as Finnish citizen can be found in the mandatory part of the VET curricula.

3. Results

While Finnish VET education targets work based learning and practice, the civic studies have less and less emphasis in the curricula. On the other hand, Finnish educational is strongly promoting lifelong learning key skills and they are promoted to be as part of vocational degrees and training. Based on the recommendation of the council of Europe life learning skills and citizenship can be seen to have more and more importance in the changing working life.

Citizenship competence involves being a responsible citizen and participating in civic activities. An active citizen should understand how society works and have knowledge of the economy and politics. This skill set also includes maintaining physical and mental well-being, health awareness, empathy, and future orientation. They should be able to follow current political, social, and economic events, think critically, solve problems, defend their views constructively,

follow a healthy lifestyle, show tolerance, understand different viewpoints, and act responsibly to promote social and cultural diversity, equality, justice, peace, and respect for others.

It is seen that in Finnish society lifelong learning competences are developed from childhood to adulthood, in different contexts and formally and informally. With this view lifelong learning goals match to the content for VET curricula, but the connection to actual learning goals of courses stays vague. In lifelong learning skills base a group for everyday thinking, but as such is not highlighted in the curriculum.

In Finland the ministry of education gives framework for the education provides to organise training quite autonomously. In addition based on the interviews with the teachers and other professionals two big challenges arise; lack of curriculum integration and time resources. All the participants embrace the importance of European and civic citizenship skills but lack the bridge to bring it to the classroom.

All qualifications are composed of units of learning outcomes. Vocational qualifications consist of vocational units and common units. Common units are mandatory. Interestingly while Finnish VET frame is flexible and gives opportunities to individual education provides the headlines for the units can be broad and therefore eventually up from the teacher how and which elements and point of views are relevant. In the light of lifelong learning principles we can see that the topics have obvious connections for example critical thinking, and understanding how society works but curriculums do not but them to words, when focusing on the professional skills.

We could easily allocate the EU citizenship theme in various parts of the degrees, what we see missing is the reference to civic general knowledge in the common part of the studies. The best reference to citizenship skills can be found in a mandatory study part of Citizenship and working life competence and a voluntary course for Communication and interaction in a foreign language.

Citizenship and working life competence focuses on ways to act as members of society without no underlying the environments outside society. How society is built and functioning is taught in basic education. On the other hand the voluntary English course focuses on communication and an individual as a citizen to use foreign language. More details of the expected outcomes in the chart below.

<p>Citizenship and working life competence</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Operating as a member of society and a citizen, - Operating in the world of work - Study and career planning - Entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial activities - Maintaining ability to work and wellbeing at work learning - Promoting sustainable development 	<p>Communication and interaction in a foreign language</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Acting as an active citizen in foreign language contexts: Student - acts as an active citizen using a foreign language - communicates in a foreign language at work and in everyday life, understanding their rights and responsibilities - takes into account the key features of different cultures in its operations
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The practical based focus in the Finnish VET studies is missing direct learning outcomes for EU citizenship and EU matters. Theme is crosscutting in the practical and work-based learning, and we can tie up connections throughout the lifelong learning principles. The vocational educators need concrete words for setting the learning goals on European citizenship. On the other hand the curricula is flexible and depending on the individual teacher the EU matters could be implemented in teaching. As there is not a course nor reference directly on what it means to be an EU citizen, the topic is not raised structurally.

4. Conclusions

EU citizenship is not explicitly integrated into the Finnish vocational education curriculum per se. No additional courses on civic competences or skills are provided. Cross cutting the interview teachers all refer to lack of integration in the curricula, lack of time and detailed knowledge, they all respond still that sometimes EU themes are discussed in class on a general level mostly based on students' questions or related to an event/happening.

There are efforts and projects aimed at enhancing awareness and understanding of the European Union within vocational training centers, international student mobilities being foreseen one form of action. Eventually student mobilities are not in everyone's interest so to guarantee the general civic education for European values and citizenship we aim to promote the initiative to the Finnish Ministry of Education to add a learning outcome to the mandatory common parts about reaching a learning outcome also in a broader view outside Finnish citizenship.

5. Appendices

1. Ministry of Education and Culture, Finnish National Agency of Education. "Finnish VET in a Nutshell." 2019. Link:
https://www.oph.fi/sites/default/files/documents/Finnish%20VET%20in%20a%20nutshell_2023.pdf
2. "Eperusteet." Link : <https://eperusteet.opintopolku.fi/>
3. "Quality Assurance National Reference VET Quality Strategy and Frameworks." Link <https://www.oph.fi/en/education-system/finnish-vocational-education-and-training/quality-assurance-national-reference/vet-quality-strategy-and-frameworks>
4. "Quality Management Finland." Link <https://www.oph.fi/en/education-and-qualifications/quality-management-finland>
5. "Qualifications and Studies VET." Link https://okm.fi/en/qualifications-and-studies_vet
6. "531/2017 englanti - Säädöskäännösten tietokanta - FINLEX ®."
7. "Perusopetuksen opetussuunnitelman perusteet 2014." 7