VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING IN EUROPE

SWEDEN
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# Table of contents

CHAPTER 1. External factors influencing VET .......................................................... 5
  1.1 Demographics – population ................................................................................. 5
  1.2 Demographics - migration ..................................................................................... 6
  1.3 Economy and labour market indicators ................................................................. 9
  1.4 Employment policies influencing VET ............................................................... 11

CHAPTER 2. Provision of VET ............................................................................. 13
  2.1 Chart of the national education system ............................................................... 13
  2.2 Introduction .......................................................................................................... 14
  2.3 Government-regulated VET provision ............................................................... 14
    2.3.1 Upper secondary initial VET ......................................................................... 15
    2.3.2 Post-secondary and tertiary VET (HVET) ...................................................... 28
  2.4 Other forms of training ........................................................................................ 31
    2.4.1. Education in working life ............................................................................ 32
    2.4.2. Liberal (non-formal) adult education ......................................................... 33
    2.4.3. Labour market policy programmes ............................................................ 33
    2.4.4. Private VET ................................................................................................. 35
  2.5 VET funding ....................................................................................................... 36
    2.5.1. Upper secondary VET ................................................................................ 36
    2.5.2 Upper secondary adult VET ........................................................................ 37
    2.5.3. Higher VET ................................................................................................. 38
    2.5.4. Liberal (non-formal) adult education ......................................................... 38
  2.6 VET governance ................................................................................................ 39
    2.6.1. Upper secondary VET ................................................................................ 39
    2.6.2. Higher VET ................................................................................................. 40
  2.7 Teachers and trainers ......................................................................................... 40
    2.7.1. Upper secondary VET ................................................................................ 40
    2.7.2. Higher VET ................................................................................................. 42

CHAPTER 3. Shaping VET qualifications ................................................................. 44
  3.1 Introduction .......................................................................................................... 44
  3.2 Anticipating skill needs ....................................................................................... 44
  3.3 Designing qualifications .................................................................................... 45
3.3.1. Governmental design of the IVET structure ......................................................... 45
3.3.2. Other stakeholders ............................................................................................... 47
3.3.3. Gap between diplomas and expected upper secondary VET qualifications........ 48
3.3.4. Partial VET qualifications for adults ................................................................. 48
3.3.5. Designing qualifications in higher VET ............................................................... 49
3.4 Recognition of prior learning .................................................................................... 49
3.5 Quality assurance ..................................................................................................... 50
  3.5.1. Upper secondary VET ...................................................................................... 51
  3.5.2. Tertiary VET .................................................................................................... 51
  3.5.3. Qualifications outside the formal education system ......................................... 51
  3.5.4. Swedish qualification framework - SeQF ......................................................... 52
CHAPTER 4. Promoting participation in VET ............................................................. 53
  4.1 Incentives for VET learners .................................................................................. 53
    4.1.1. Study allowance for students under the age of 20 ....................................... 53
    4.1.2. Students aged 20 and above ....................................................................... 54
    4.1.3. Learners in adult education and training ...................................................... 55
    4.1.4. Financial support for disadvantaged groups ................................................. 55
  4.2 Incentives for enterprises ..................................................................................... 56
    4.2.1 Disadvantaged groups .................................................................................. 56
  4.3 Guidance and counselling ..................................................................................... 57
5. References ............................................................................................................... 61
List of figures and tables

Figures

Figure 1. Population ages 0-19, 20-64 and 65 years and older 1960-2015 and forecast 2016-60 .................................................................................................................................6

Figure 2. The total number of people, by age, 2013-18, in the reception system of the Swedish Migration Agency (Migrationsverket) .........................................................8

Figure 3. Future employment growth in Sweden (2016-30) across sectors compared to distribution of employment in Sweden and the EU (2014) .................................10

Figure 4. Groups and corresponding education programmes in which the shortages of skilled workers, in numbers, are expected to be the largest by 2035 ......11

Figure 5. General structure for vocational programmes in the upper secondary school.........................................................................................................................16

Figure 6. Number of applicants, and gender distribution of VET programmes in 2017 .........................................................................................................................21

Figure 7. Applications for general and vocational upper secondary programmes (2011/12-2017/18) ........................................................................................................25

Figure 8. Average voucher cost per upper secondary VET programme per year as determined by the National Agency for Education, 2018 .................................37

Tables

Table 1. Net population change 2000-18........................................................................................................................................7

Table 2. General versus vocational upper secondary programmes .................................................................15

Table 3. Summary of governance and distribution of responsibilities in Swedish upper secondary education (including IVET) ........................................................................41

Table 4. Responsibility of goals, contents, diplomas and quality assurance in VET .........................................................................................................................50
CHAPTER 1.

External factors influencing VET

1.1 Demographics – population

In May 2018, the population of Sweden was 10 161 797(1), a 1.2% population increase since May 2017. Sweden is the third largest country in the European Union in terms of land area and the population is concentrated in the southern parts of the country.

Just like in other parts of Europe, Sweden has an increasing proportion of elderly people in the population. The 20-64 age group made up 57% of the population in 2015. By 2060 this proportion is anticipated by Statistics Sweden (SCB) to decrease to 52% and the elderly are expected to outnumber those under the age of 20 by 2045 (see Figure 1)(2). Thus the labour force will decrease yet will need to support a greater proportion of children, teenagers and elderly people (aged 65 and over). The retirement age, from 61 to 67, is determined by the employee but the longer one works, the larger the pension will be. The average retirement age is 64, the highest in the European Union (3). More than three out of four aged 55 to 64 (76.4%) have a job in Sweden, compared to 57.1% in the EU (4). A debate has nevertheless emerged in recent years on raising the retirement age and in December 2017 there was a broad political agreement on raising the retirement age to 62-68 years by 2020, and to 63-69 by 2023(5).

There is expected to be a shortage of skilled labour when the older generation leaves the labour market, especially in small towns and rural areas. It is vital to take advantage of all the resources on the labour market, for example, to increase the throughput of young people in the education system and to reduce dropouts from upper secondary schools (Arbetsförmedlingen, 2010).

(1) May, 2018. SCB (Statistics Sweden).
   http://www.scb.se/hitta-statistik/statistik-efter-amne/befolkning/befolkningens-sammansattning/befolkningsstatistik/#_Nyckeltal
1.2 Demographics - migration

In the 20th century, Sweden has gone from being a country of emigrants, to a country of immigrants. Since 2000, the population has increased by more than one million or 14%\(^6\), due to high nativity rates and immigration (see Table 1). Approximately 82% of the population growth in 2018 is due to the immigration surplus and about 18% is due to the birth surplus \(^7\). In 2015, a record number of asylum seekers came to Sweden (see Figure 2) and in November 2015 temporary border controls were set up. One of Europe’s most generous refugee policies was heavily downscaled and immigration has since declined.

A high birth rate combined with high immigration is a challenge to the education system, although it may also exert positive future effects on the dependency ratio. Due to high immigration, the number of newly-arrived children of school age (7-20 years) more than tripled in one year between 2014 and 2015. The number of newly-arrived


youths in the age group (16-20 years) of upper secondary education was 3.6 times higher in 2015 than in 2014 (see Figure 2).

Table 1. Net population change 2000-18

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Births</th>
<th>Deaths</th>
<th>Immigrants</th>
<th>Emigrants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>8 882 792</td>
<td>90 441</td>
<td>93 461</td>
<td>58 659</td>
<td>34 091</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>9 047 752</td>
<td>101 346</td>
<td>91 710</td>
<td>65 229</td>
<td>38 118</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>9 415 570</td>
<td>115 641</td>
<td>90 487</td>
<td>98 801</td>
<td>48 853</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>9 851 017</td>
<td>114 870</td>
<td>90 907</td>
<td>134 240</td>
<td>55 830</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>10 230 185</td>
<td>115 832</td>
<td>92 185</td>
<td>132 602</td>
<td>46 981</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change 2000-17</td>
<td></td>
<td>15.2%</td>
<td>28.1%</td>
<td>-1.4%</td>
<td>126.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The largest share of newly-arrived immigrants between 16 and 20 study in the upper secondary Language Introduction Programme (Språkinstitution), where they focus on learning Swedish. The Language introduction programme doubled in size in just one year from 2015 to 2016, due to the large influx of newly arrived young people. Nearly all students who entered the programme in the autumn of 2016 were newly arrived (i.e. had been in Sweden for four years, or less) and a majority of the students had only been in Sweden for one year (8). In the autumn of 2017 there were slightly more than 32 000 students in the Language introduction programme which corresponded to about 9.25% of all upper secondary students or almost 55% of the students in introduction programmes (9). If they master Swedish as a second language at compulsory school level, they are eligible to attend another programme of upper secondary education before the year they turn 20(10). Those who do not master Swedish before the age of 20 are still eligible for the Vocational Introduction Programme (Yrkesinriktning), in which there is a focus on VET training or courses aimed at establishing the learner in the labour market or on becoming eligible for a VET programme. They are also eligible for the individual alternative programme (Individuellt alternativ) which is individually designed to fit the individual’s needs.

However, newly-arrived immigrants have a disparate educational background: slightly less than 20% have seven years or less education, whereas 37% have 13

(8) Skolverket (2018a) https://www.skolverket.se/publikationer?id=3955  
(9) Skolverket, Table 5D.  
(10) Other introduction programmes (Preparatory Education – Preparandutbildning and Programme-oriented Individual Options – Programinriktat individuellt val) and the national programmes which are either VET-programmes, or higher education preparatory programmes.
years or more \(^{(11)}\). While some of the newly-arrived immigrants will master Swedish and consequently proceed rapidly through upper secondary school and tertiary education, many are likely to work in positions for which lower qualifications are required \(^{(12)}\). A majority of the newly-arrived learners who have advanced rapidly from the Language Introduction Programme to one of the national upper secondary programmes, have entered a higher education preparatory programme. Entry into VET programmes is more common among students who spend more time in the Language Introduction Programme (Skolverket 2016). The proportion of youths who are foreign born is also increasing in initial VET education. In the academic year 2013/14, 8.9% of the students in upper secondary IVET were born in another country, in 2017/18 the proportion had increased to 14.4%. \(^{(13)}\)

Figure 2. **The total number of people, by age, 2013-18, in the reception system of the Swedish Migration Agency (Migrationsverket)**

Source: Swedish Migration Agency 2018


\(^{(12)}\) For eligibility to upper secondary VET-programmes, the student must have passing grades from year nine of compulsory school in Swedish or Swedish as second language, English, Mathematics and five more subjects. For eligibility to upper secondary higher education preparatory programmes, the students must have passing grades from year nine of compulsory school in Swedish or Swedish as a second language, English, Mathematics and nine more subjects. For some higher education preparatory programmes, there are specific courses included in entry requirements.

1.3 Economy and labour market indicators

The Swedish economy is strong, albeit maturing. Unemployment is at a low level which is slowing down the growth of new job openings and there is also a shortage of skilled workers (14). In 2017 the employment rate in Sweden was 81.8% compared to 72.2% in the EU (15). This year, 2018, employment of 16-64 year-olds is estimated to increase by 78 000 and in 2019 by 67 000. In the light of an ageing population, the increased immigration of recent years makes up a valuable addition to the labour market but as the workforce has become increasingly well-educated, competition for work is sharper. Employers almost always require an upper secondary qualification even in professions where education requirements traditionally have been low. A completed upper secondary diploma is a necessity for employment in most cases. According to the Swedish Public Employment Service (Arbetsförmedlingen) analysis, service sector jobs have increased while industrial jobs have declined which has contributed to a lower level of demand for lower skill jobs, and a higher demand for labour with upper secondary or tertiary qualification. In comparison to the EU average more people in Sweden are employed in sectors such as education and health care (see Figure 3). Immigrants with secondary education, or higher, account for virtually all recent increases in employment. In 2017, for example, eight out of ten employees in new jobs were foreign born. Immigrants accounted for about 90% of the job growth in education, health care and private services. In the industrial sector, all new job openings were filled by the foreign born. In 2018-19, around seven out of ten new job openings are expected to go to foreign born (16).

In the future, the most substantial growth \( ^{(17)} \) is expected in health and social care, the public sector and in construction. A decline is expected in manufacturing, arts and recreation, while the wholesale and retail sector is expected to remain the same. Although much of the expected growth is in sectors for which a tertiary diploma is needed, employers also lack VET-educated workers from upper secondary level, particularly in vehicle services and transport, in natural resources, construction and in the restaurant sectors \( ^{(18)} \). In the health care sector there is a need for assistant nurses (the most common profession in Sweden) trained at upper secondary level. The number of learners in several areas of VET education is expected to be too low to meet the estimated demand from employers. In the long run, there is a risk of shortages. All in all, the shortage is expected to be greatest from the upper secondary Health and social care programme (or corresponding adult education), where the current educational volume is not expected to be sufficient to meet the large increase in demand for care for the elderly. See Figure 4 for an estimate of shortage of skilled workers by 2035.

\( ^{(17)} \) Cedefop (2018) Skills panorama.  
\( ^{(18)} \) Yrkesregistret, SCB
Despite the strong development of the Swedish economy and a relatively low unemployment rate, certain groups show continued difficulties in establishing themselves on the labour market. Newly-arrived immigrants, people with disabilities and people with low skill levels and only lower secondary education are particularly vulnerable. Students who have completed the third year of upper secondary education are twice as likely to find a job as those who have only completed one or two years (Skolverket 2014c). The challenge to train and retrain many of these in the vulnerable groups will be dealt with in Sections 2.3.1.5 and 2.4.

1.4 Employment policies influencing VET

Very few professions are regulated (19) in Sweden. Salaries are negotiated by social partners and set in collective agreements. The qualification levels of some professions are also regulated in collective agreements between the social partners, and only a few employment legislations or policy measures influence VET. Policies or legislation that influence VET are mainly of two kinds and regulate work-based learning: those that regulate work environment and safety, and those that regulate employee protection.

(19) There are 38 professions regulated in 2018, mostly in the fields of education and medicine. See https://www.uhr.se/internationella-mojligheter/arbeite-inom-EU/reglerade-utbildningar/ for a complete and updated list with official names in Swedish and English.
Work environment legislation covers safety measures, risk assessment, work hours, and time for rest. Learners in VET are covered by the same legislation as employees, and companies have to ensure that safety measures are provided equally for learners in WBL-settings as for employees. The education provider has a responsibility to check that companies comply with the legislation, for example that risk assessments are performed during work placements, and as such share the responsibility of safety for learners with the companies.

The Employment Protection Act, (Lagen om Anställningsskydd, LAS) is a labour-market regulation that protects employees. The act regulates reasons for temporary positions, minimum notice times, priority of rehiring, termination of employment which is restricted to redundancy and behavioural reasons like misconduct. In case of termination due to redundancy, the law requires workplaces to keep their personnel according to seniority. As of July 2014, a legislative (20) change allows students attending apprenticeship education in upper secondary school to be exempt from the measures of the Employment Protection Act while they are in education. Learners who are in an apprentice path of VET can be employed in what is called an upper secondary apprentice position (Gymnasial Lärlingsanställning, GLA, see also Section 2.3.1 on work-based learning, and Section 4.1 on Study allowance for students under the age of 20). The employment will be terminated when the learner terminates his or her upper secondary education without adherence to the termination rules of the Employment Protection Act.

CHAPTER 2.
Provision of VET

2.1 Chart of the national education system

NB: ISCED-P 2011.
Source: Cedefop and ReferNet Sweden.
2.2 Introduction

Modern Swedish vocational education and training (VET) is, in some respects, shaped by its historical development. Views on the aim and role of education have historically oscillated between emphasising the development of generic skills and emphasising the importance of education for skills provision. The role of, and coordination between, the state and working life in the organisation and delivery of education have also changed over time. VET is presently characterised by low private business involvement and high public commitment, largely reflecting a political strategy to integrate VET into the general education system (Persson and Hermelin 2018). Issues regarding skills provision, both regionally and nationally, youth unemployment and a fluctuating economy are factors that strongly impact the focus and reforms of initiatives in VET.

The present upper secondary school system was introduced in autumn 2011. The 2011 reform (21) emphasised that education must provide good specific preparation for working life or the higher education studies students will continue to. With the reform there was a shift from the previous vocational preparatory programmes to vocational programmes through which students on completion should be ready for working life. Therefore, through the reform more vocational content was introduced in the VET-programmes replacing certain general education classes which were taken out. Through this reform the general eligibility to enter tertiary studies for all VET programmes disappeared.

2.3 Government-regulated VET provision

Government (22) regulated formal VET is provided at upper secondary and tertiary levels. At age 16, after nine years of compulsory school, eligible students have the right to proceed to one of the 12 VET programmes (yrkesprogram) or to one of the six HE preparatory programmes (högskoleförberedande program) in the upper secondary school (gymnasieskola). A diploma of completed upper secondary education is a

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(21) https://www.government.se/49b72d/contentassets/58c89d7158de4d2a9bda2da6082bc743/swedish-national-reform-programme-2011

(22) Upper secondary school and municipal adult education are regulated through the Education Act (Sveriges Riksdag, 2010), the Upper Secondary School Ordinance (Regeringen, 2010) and the Adult Education Ordinance (Regeringen, 2011). The Education Act contains general provisions that are applicable to all types and levels of education, from pre-school to adult education, as well as the basic provisions for these different education types and levels. These provisions are made more specific in their respective ordinances. Similarly, higher vocational education is regulated through the Higher Vocational Education Act (Sveriges Riksdag, 2009) and the Higher Vocational Education Ordinance (Regeringen, 2009).
qualification placed at SeQF level 4 (EQF level 4) by the Government (23). Adults without upper secondary education who wish to change career paths can enrol in upper secondary VET courses in municipal adult education institutions (kommunal vuxenutbildning) in the Individualised modularised pathways for adults.

At tertiary level, there are higher VET programmes (yrkeshögskoleutbildningar) leading to first or second cycle VET qualifications placed by the Government at SeQF levels 5 and 6 (EQF levels 5 and 6) (24). These are applicable to education for professions requiring specific knowledge or certification to work in that profession.

2.3.1 Upper secondary initial VET

VET at upper secondary level consists of national vocational programmes that aim at preparing students for the labour market. The main programmes are the VET programmes which are offered in form of school based VET and apprenticeship. In comparison to the general secondary VET programmes ‘Higher preparatory programmes’, only about one third of the learners follows those VET programmes (Table 2).

Table 2. General versus vocational upper secondary programmes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Study path</th>
<th>Higher preparatory programmes (general education)</th>
<th>VET programmes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>School based VET</td>
<td>Apprentice based VET</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Admission requirements</td>
<td>Passing grades in 12 compulsory school subjects.</td>
<td>Passing grades in 8 compulsory school subjects.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Passing grades in 8 compulsory school subjects.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Credits</td>
<td>2500 credits</td>
<td>2500 credits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2500 credits</td>
<td>2500 credits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Duration</td>
<td>3 years 2 180 hours</td>
<td>3 years 2 430 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work-based learning</td>
<td>Not defined in any regulation</td>
<td>Minimum 15 weeks of work-based learning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Minimum 50% work-based learning (25).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Progression possibilities</td>
<td>Provide eligibility to tertiary education.</td>
<td>Provide basic eligibility to tertiary education if students choose some elective courses.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Provide basic eligibility to tertiary education if students choose some elective courses.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enrolment 2017/18</td>
<td>194 036 students</td>
<td>84 441 students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10 289 students</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Skolverket, Table 5D, Lärlingscentrum.

(24) ibid.
(25) Transfer from school-based to apprentice-based VET is possible during years one, two or three. After transfer, a minimum of 50% of the remaining time should be studied as WBL.
2.3.1.1. Programme structure

Upper secondary VET programmes are accessible to young people aged 16 to 20, last three years and cover a broad spectrum of vocational areas and vocational outcomes. Programme structure and courses are determined nationally.

The scope of the courses is defined by ‘upper secondary credits’ (gymnasiepoäng). In conformity with ECVET points, these credits are not related to time but indicate the scope of the studies or effort required to attain the goals for a specific course. Upper secondary credits are applied in both general and vocational programmes and courses. A student enrolled in an upper secondary programme must accumulate 2 500 upper secondary credits. In municipal adult education, 2 400 upper secondary credits are required. In both paths, 2 250 of these credits must be passed. Passing grades in Swedish or Swedish as a second language, English, mathematics, and a diploma project are required. In the three-year lasting VET programmes (school-based or apprenticeship) 1 600 credits are allocated to courses in vocational subjects (see the structure of a vocational programme in Figure 5).

Figure 5. General structure for vocational programmes in the upper secondary school


Upper secondary compulsory subjects, called ‘foundation’ subjects, are included in all national upper secondary programmes, both VET programmes (school-based and apprenticeship) and HE preparatory programmes, but vary in scope
between vocational programmes and higher education preparatory programmes. These subjects are English, history, physical education and health, mathematics, science studies, religion, social studies, and Swedish or Swedish as a second language \(^{(26)}\). Although vocational subjects and other subjects are determined nationally, schools can combine different courses in programme specialisation clusters, enabling flexibility and local adaptations leading to a variety of vocational outcomes.

Governing bodies also have the opportunity to deviate from the national vocational programmes by applying for special variations (särskilda varianter) or education open to nationwide admission (riksrekryterande utbildningar). Special variations deviate somewhat from the nationally determined programme structures to enable local or regional labour market needs to be met. Programmes open to nationwide admission may be relevant where there is a national interest in admitting learners from all parts of the country. These deviations, however, should always be quality assured and approved by the National Agency for Education.

Due to modularised programmes, upper secondary VET learners may transfer one or more successfully completed courses to another programme or orientation within a programme at upper secondary level, or to municipal adult education.

2.3.1.2. VET programme types
In Sweden the following VET programmes types at upper secondary level are offered:

(a) VET programmes (school-based or apprenticeship);
(b) individualised programmes for learners not eligible for national upper sec. programmes;
(c) programmes for SEN learners;
(d) individualised pathways for adults

(a) VET programmes (school-based or apprenticeship)
VET programmes comprising ‘school-based education’ (skolförlagd utbildning) or ‘apprenticeship education’ (lärlingsutbildning) last three years and lead to EQF level 4, ISCED 353.

The main difference between these two programmes which were introduced in 2011, is the proportion of work-based learning (WBL). Whereas apprentices need a minimum of 50% of WBL, school-based learners have a minimum of 15 weeks (approximately 15%) of WBL. Diploma goals, subject syllabuses and orientations as well as the admission and diploma requirements are the same in both paths (see Table

\(^{(26)}\) A learner whose mother tongue is other than Swedish may include Swedish as a second language instead of Swedish within the compulsory (foundation) subjects. The compulsory subjects partly cover the European key competences. See Skolverket (2016a) for more information.
2). In addition, since 2014 apprentices can have an employment contract with the company where they do their work-based training.

Learners who want to access these upper secondary VET programmes (27) must have passing grades in the subjects Swedish or Swedish as a second language, English, mathematics and five other compulsory school subjects. These admission requirements are lower compared to those for higher education preparatory programmes (28), where in addition passing grades in nine other compulsory school subjects are required (see Table 2).

There are 12 VET programmes at upper secondary level which are offered in form of apprenticeship or of school-based programmes. They focus different occupational fields and are designed to meet the skills demand from the labour market. Each programme is briefly described below, with preliminary data of the number and proportion of learners in 2017/18.

1) The building and construction programme (Bygg- och anläggningsprogrammet) aims to develop students’ knowledge about and skills in the building and construction of new buildings, conversions and renovation. With a diploma from the programme, students should have the knowledge needed to perform jobs in the building and construction areas, such as construction worker, construction machine operator, building worker, house painter or sheet metal worker. 12 400 students are enrolled in the programme, which is approximately 13.5% of all VET students in upper secondary school. It is also the programme in which the largest proportion of learners study in the apprenticeship path. In 2017, 24% of the learners in the programme studied as apprentices (29).

2) The business and administration programme (Handels- och administrationsprogrammet) aims to develop students’ knowledge about retailing and administration, where service and communication are crucial. With a diploma from the programme, students should have the knowledge needed to perform jobs in commerce, such as sales people, purchasers and shop managers, or in administrative areas such as personnel, business or ICT administrators. 8 400 students are enrolled in the programme, which is approximately 9% of all VET students in upper secondary school.

3) The child and recreation programme (Barn- och fritidsprogrammet) aims to develop students’ knowledge in educational methodology and their skills in carrying out tasks in areas for which the programme provides instruction. With a diploma from the programme, students should have the knowledge needed to work with children, youths or adults in pedagogical and social vocational areas, or in the recreational or healthcare sectors, in jobs such as pre-school and child

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(28) Data from Lärlingscentrum.
care, swimming or sports facilities personnel, or personal assistants. 8,500 students are enrolled in the programme, which is approximately 9% of all VET students in upper secondary school.

4) The electricity and energy programme (Ei- och energiprogrammet) aims to develop students' knowledge of supplying and assisting basic societal functions such as the production, installation and distribution of electricity, energy and water systems. With a diploma from the programme, students should have the knowledge needed to work with automated production systems, systems for energy, environmental and hydro technologies, or computers and communication systems, or as electricians in the distribution or installation of electricity. 14,000 students are enrolled in the programme, which is approximately 15% of all VET students in upper secondary school.

5) The handicraft programme (Hantverksprogrammet) aims to develop students' skills in carrying out recurring tasks from idea to finished product, i.e. identifying needs, planning with sketches or drawings, choosing and handling tools, materials and techniques, carrying out and reporting work, and also analysing and assessing results. With a diploma from the programme, students should have the knowledge needed to work in floristry, hairdressing, carpentry, textiles or handicrafts. 6,100 students are enrolled in the programme, which is approximately 6.5% of all VET students in upper secondary school.

6) The health and social care programme (Vård- och omsorgsprogrammet) aims to develop students' knowledge about and skills in health and social care, as well as provide knowledge about health, ill-health and functional impairment. With a diploma from the programme, students should have the knowledge needed to work in health and social care. 9,600 students are enrolled in the programme, which is approximately 10.5% of all VET students in upper secondary school.

7) The hotel and tourism programme (Hotell- och turismprogrammet) aims to develop students' knowledge about service and customer reception, which is crucial within the industry. With a diploma from the programme, students should have the knowledge needed to work in the hotel, conference or tourist industries. 2,900 students are enrolled in the programme, which is approximately 3% of all VET students in upper secondary school.

8) HVAC and property maintenance programme (VVS- och fastighetsprogrammet) aims to develop students' knowledge in installation, error detection, repairs, operations and maintenance, and management of property, technical facilities and systems such as those for heating, ventilation and refrigeration. With a diploma from the programme, students should have the knowledge needed to work in the sectors of property, refrigeration and heat pumps, ventilation or in heating, ventilation and sanitation. 3,200 students are enrolled in the
programme, which is approximately 3.5% of all VET students in upper secondary school.

9) The industrial technology programme (*Industritekniska programmet*) aims to develop students' knowledge in industrial technology and production. With a diploma from the programme, students should have the knowledge needed to work in areas such as process-oriented or automated material handling and production planning, operations and maintenance, or welding and other forms of metal assembly. 4 100 students are enrolled in the programme, which is approximately 4.5% of all VET students in upper secondary school.

10) The natural resource use programme (*Naturbruksprogrammet*) aims to develop students' knowledge about and skills in harnessing nature and managing natural resources. With a diploma from the programme, students should have the knowledge needed to work in the natural resource use sector, with plants, animals, land, water or forests, with horses or in park and horticultural environments. 8 200 students are enrolled in the programme, which is approximately 9% of all VET students in upper secondary school.

11) The restaurant management and food programme (*Restaurang- och livsmedelsprogrammet*) aims to develop students' knowledge in those parts of the restaurant and food industry where work involves close contact with customers, in the first instance using handicraft methods, both traditional and modern. With a diploma from the programme, students should have the knowledge needed to work in the restaurant and food sector, in e.g. restaurants, bakeries or charcuteries. 4 800 students are enrolled in the programme, which is approximately 5% of all VET students in upper secondary school.

12) The vehicle and transport programme (*Fordons- och transportprogrammet*) aims to develop students' knowledge about technology in different vehicles or the ability to manage transport. With a diploma from the programme, students should have the knowledge needed to work, for instance, as mechanics, drivers, or in stores or terminals. 10 300 students are enrolled in the programme, which is approximately 11% of all VET students in upper secondary school.

The VET programmes that the most applicants put as their first choice in 2017 were the building and construction programme, the electricity and engineering programme and the vehicle and transport programme. These programmes are highly male-dominated, which means that the VET-programmes as a whole had a larger proportion of male than female applicants, 60 and 40% respectively (see Figure 6).
After completing upper secondary education, learners receive ‘gymnasieexamen’ (upper secondary diploma) giving them the possibility to access higher VET studies, general tertiary education (depending on the achievement of certain passing grades, see Section 2.3.1.7), or directly enter the labour market. In VET, the diploma is ‘Yrkesexamen’ (vocational diploma).

(b) Individualised programmes for learners not eligible for national upper sec. programmes

Learners who are not eligible for an upper secondary national programme may, until they turn 20\(^{(30)}\), apply for one of the four existing individualised programmes for learners not eligible for national upper secondary programmes (nationally also referred to as introduction programme, \textit{introduktionsprogram})\(^{(31)}\). Depending on the programme type and learners’ performance, these following programmes last from one up to three years and lead to ISCED 244, 341, 351. These programmes offer learners an individually-adapted education, which satisfy their varying educational needs and

\(^{(30)}\) More precise from the second half of the calendar year in which they reach the age of 20.
\(^{(31)}\) From 2011 until July 2019 there were five introductory programmes. The preparatory education programme (\textit{preparandutbildning}) and the individual options-oriented programme (\textit{programinriktat individuellt val}) will be replaced by an updated individual options-oriented programme aimed at having the same structure and goal for learners striving to become eligible for admission to either a VET-programme or a higher education preparatory programme.
provide clear educational paths. These paths provide a foundation for further education by giving access to upper secondary programmes and lead to entrance into the labour market, even though they do not offer a vocational qualification. Some of the introduction programmes include IVET courses, which lead to a certain number of credits, which can be counted as partial qualification when later following a VET programme (see also Section 3.3.4). After an introductory programme has been completed, the head teacher issues an upper secondary school certificate (Gymnasieintyg) specifying the education the learner has received \(^{(32)}\).

The following four individualised programmes are offered:

- the language introduction programme (Språkintroduktion) provides young immigrants who have recently arrived in the country with an education in which an emphasis is placed on Swedish language training to enable them to progress to upper secondary school or to other forms of education;
- while in the vocational introduction programme (Yrkesintroduktion) students receive vocationally-oriented training which eases their access to the labour market, or which leads to studies in a vocational programme;
- the individual options-oriented programme \(^{(33)}\) (programinriktat individuellt val) that should be designed for a group of students who do not have all the passing grades required for a vocational or a higher education preparatory programme;
- and the individual alternative (individuellt alternativ) programme is offered to students who should progress to the vocational introduction, to other forms of education or to the labour market. The individual alternative is designed for an individual student on the basis of the student's needs and should include upper secondary courses if the individual possesses the preconditions to study these courses. Other initiatives that are favourable for the student’s knowledge development should also be included in the education programme.

(c) Programmes for SEN learners

Programmes for SEN learners (Gymnasiesärskolan) last four years and lead to EQF 2, ISCED 343 and 353. They are offered at upper secondary school for individuals with learning disabilities, which is a voluntary type of school that young people with learning disabilities can choose to attend.

Learners with special needs are individually assessed and are placed either in a national programme that has a programme structure with given courses or in an individualised programme which is adapted to the needs of the individual. The latter


\(^{(33)}\) Until 2019 this programme is only designed for students who wish to continue on to a VET-programme. Note the comment in the previous note.
targets learners with more special demanding needs. Those individualised programmes are composed of subject areas and may include work experience.

There are nine national upper secondary school programmes, largely mirroring the programmes of upper secondary school (Section 2.3.1.2) but adjusted to provide optimal learning for the target group. The national programmes for SEN learners are primarily vocationally-oriented and include a minimum of 22 weeks of work-based learning. A national programme may also be undertaken as an upper secondary school apprenticeship. All learners should complete a diploma project at the end of the programme. This should be in line with the programme’s objectives and the student’s education. The project aims to show that students can manage normal tasks at work in a vocational area.

When learners have completed their education in national or individual programmes, they receive a special needs upper secondary school certificate (Gymnasiesärskolebevis) (34). The certificate describes which skills and experiences the learner has acquired from the special needs upper secondary school and contains details of:

- the programme;
- subject areas or courses that the learner has studied;
- grades;
- the learner’s work-based learning or placement;
- the special needs upper secondary school work placement.

Learners can continue in SEN education for adults; this is not considered as progression.

(d) Individual modularised pathways for adults

Individual modularised pathways for adults (grundläggande nivå/compulsory level and gymnasial komvux/upper secondary level, including särvux/special needs education for adults with learning disabilities) are offered at ISCED level 244, 344, 351, 353. To be eligible to access those pathways for adults, learners must be resident in the country, be at least 20 years old (35), and have completed a national programme in the upper secondary school or equivalent education.

Municipal adult education at upper secondary level aims at providing adults with knowledge up to the upper secondary leaving certificate, granting them access to tertiary education. Nationally determined programmes do not exist in municipal adult education; instead courses are offered based on the needs and circumstances of the adult learner. An individual study plan is drawn up together with the student. This

(34) https://www.skolverket.se/getFile?file=3044
should also include information about the student’s educational goals and the planned scope of the studies.

All adults are entitled to free education to complete compulsory education as well as Swedish for immigrants, as well as the upper secondary courses to gain eligibility to tertiary education. But there is a distinction between eligibility and the right to education. In short, there is no right for adults to study a VET programme. An adult with a qualification at EQF 4 is not entitled to adult municipal VET education (but not prevented if the municipality is willing to finance it). However, all adults are entitled to study Swedish or English for eligibility to higher education. WBL is not compulsory, but there are incentives through state grants available for providers if 70% of the education is provided through WBL in IVET for adult apprentices. For adults with learning disabilities following special education, 50% of the education has to be provided as WBL for receiving state grants.

Depending on the chosen programmes, graduates can acquire an upper secondary leaving certificate granting them access to tertiary education (for further information see Section 2.3.1.7). They can also acquire vocational qualifications equivalent to IVET diplomas for the young or partial IVET qualifications (see also Section 3.3.4) (36).

2.3.1.3. Participation
The vast majority of learners continue on to upper secondary school after nine years of compulsory school (37). In the autumn of 2017 there were 347 863 learners in upper secondary education, out of which 288 766 were in a national programme (excluding introduction programmes). Of the learners admitted to national programmes, one third attends VET programmes and two thirds general higher education preparatory programmes (see Table 2). The share of VET learners has decreased over the past few years but there are indications that the decline has come to a halt or levelled out. The proportion of applicants to a VET programme as first choice increased for the academic year 2017/18 for the first time since the reform of 2011 (38), as shown in Figure 7. Throughput is also showing signs of improvement. There is an increase of


(37) Although upper secondary education is not compulsory, there are strong mechanisms to motivate young people under the age of 20 who have not completed an upper secondary education to begin or resume their education. See Skolverket (2018b). Guidance and outreach for inactive and unemployed – Sweden. Cedefop ReferNet thematic perspectives series for more information.

learners who complete their education and receive a vocational diploma within three years (39).

**Figure 7.** Applications for general and vocational upper secondary programmes (2011/12-2017/18)

![Graph showing applications for HE and VET programs](https://www.skolverket.se/getFile?file=3855)

Source: Skolverket, 2017

The decrease of the share of VET learners which lasted until the school year 2016/17, might be caused by the changed admissions requirements to higher education (40). Attractiveness for VET decreased since 2011, caused also by the fact that VET did not provide automatic eligibility to higher education (see Section 2.2). Policy measures have been launched, including a government inquiry (41) with the task to analyse and suggest how to make all upper secondary programmes more attractive and include eligibility for tertiary education in all programmes, including upper secondary VET. In the spring of 2018 this was followed up by a government memorandum and subsequently by a Bill presented to Parliament with proposals to include courses that make all VET learners eligible for admission to higher education. Although the Bill was rejected, the case illustrates that policy makers are concerned with the declining rate of VET-learners and the difficulties in launching policy remedies. One successful measure, in contrast, is a legislative change that came into effect on 1 January 2017, introducing a right to study courses in municipal adult education that provide eligibility for admission to both academic tertiary and higher vocational education (42). As such

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(40) This is extensively discussed in the forthcoming ReferNet thematic report analysing the Cedefop opinion survey (Skolverket, forthcoming).

(41) Regeringen (2016).

http://www.regeringen.se/rattsdokument/statens-offentliga-utredningar/2016/10/sou-201677/

(42) Sveriges Riksdag (2010), Chapter 20.
there are no dead ends in the educational system since VET learners after graduation from upper secondary school have the right to study courses required for admission to higher education in municipal adult education.

In 2016/17 3,294 students were enrolled in a vocational national programme for learners with special education needs, which correspondence to 55% of all students enrolled in upper secondary education for SEN learners. Consequently, 45% were enrolled in individual programmes. In a similar manner special needs education for adults (särskild utbildning för vuxna) is directed at adults with intellectual disabilities.

### 2.3.1.4. Work-based learning

Learning at one or several workplaces is possible in all upper secondary education. In the three year lasting national upper secondary VET programmes and the programmes for SEN learners, work-based learning (arbetsplatsförlagt lärande, apl) (WBL) is compulsory and covers a minimum of 15 weeks of the three-year education (see Table 2; Section 2.3.1.2). There are no upper limits. Similarly, in all national upper secondary programmes for SEN learners, a minimum of 22 weeks of WBL should be included. In adult education and higher education preparatory programmes WBL is not compulsory.

If more than half the learning takes place at a workplace, it is referred to as upper secondary apprenticeship education (lärlingsutbildning) which requires tripartite individual education contracts between the student (or, if under the age of 18, the student's guardian), the employer and the school. Apprenticeship education can be found in upper secondary VET programmes, programmes for SEN learners, as well as in the individual modularised pathways for adults. As of July 2014, students attending apprenticeship education in upper secondary school may be employed in what is called an upper secondary apprentice position (Gymnasial Lärlingsanställning, GLA, see Section 1.3.) As a result, upper secondary apprentices can be offered employment while still in education in accordance with adapted labour law provisions.

The content of work-based learning is governed by the same syllabuses as applicable to school-based education. It is up to the schools in cooperation with the WBL provider to decide which subject should be learnt during WBL. A learner participating in WBL has a trainer at the workplace who supervises and mentors him/her. In the introduction programme, it is also possible to take part in learning at a workplace where there is no link to a syllabus. This is referred to as work placement (praktik).

### 2.3.1.5. Validation

Within municipal adult education at upper secondary level, validation is possible within all courses and must be based on the student's circumstances and needs. Validation in

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http://www.riksdagen.se/sv/dokument-lagar/dokument/svensk-forfattningssamling/skollag-2010800_sfs-2010-800#K20
municipal adult education is mainly used for learners who intend to study in municipal adult education. As such validation is used to customize the content of the studies according to needs of the student and to shorten the time of the education, or to assess knowledge and skills that are required for eligibility for a particular education, the student receives a certificate through validation instead of a grade or diploma. If the learner wishes to receive a formal grade, he or she will have to pass an extended test covering all the content of the particular course.

A 16 to 20 years old learner in upper secondary education, may also validate his or her knowledge and skills through an extended test. The purpose of this test, however, is not to individualise the learning to progress more rapidly through the education programme, but rather to let the learner have a second chance if he or she has received a failing grade or to cover courses not previously studied if the learner changes programme or orientation. Documented knowledge and skills achieved by studies abroad, or through other means, may be credited to the student at a passing level without the extended tests.

2.3.1.6. Providers
In addition to the public municipal bodies, private entities may also be approved as organisers and run independent upper secondary schools after approval from the Swedish Schools Inspectorate. Independent schools are regulated by the same legislation and governing documents as municipal schools and may offer both VET and higher education preparatory programmes. Providers will be discussed further in the section on VET governance.

2.3.1.7. Progression paths
Students holding a diploma from an upper secondary programme or from municipal adult education are eligible for higher VET education. Some higher VET programmes require additional qualifications which are defined by the relevant VET provider (see Section 2.3.2.3 for more information).

Learners having successfully completed a VET programme and holding the vocational diploma, can also obtain basic eligibility for higher general education if they have passing grades in three courses (300 credits) of Swedish or Swedish as a second language, two courses (200 credits) in English and one course (100 credits) in mathematics. One consequence of the reform of 2011 was that learners did not automatically become eligible for admission to tertiary education since only one course (of 100 credits) in each of the three subjects leading to basic eligibility is mandatory in upper secondary VET. Basic eligibility to tertiary education has been, since the reform, provided by upper secondary VET if students choose some elective courses. In addition, specific entry requirements are necessary to access some tertiary education courses or programmes. For example, engineering courses require that a student has successfully completed a higher level of mathematics. All students in upper secondary
school have the right within the scope of their programme, or by adding credits, to study the courses required for basic eligibility to higher education (see Table 2 for admission requirements to tertiary academic education).

2.3.2 Post-secondary and tertiary VET (HVET)

Higher Vocational Education is offered at post-secondary and tertiary level and combines theoretical and practical studies. Programmes at these levels have a strong emphasis on workplace training and are delivered in cooperation between education providers and those employers and industries affected by the programme. Students of those programmes are eligible for financial aid from the Swedish Board of Student Finance (CSN).

2.3.2.1. Programme structure and types

Higher VET programmes last up to two years and are offered at post-secondary level leading to EQF level 5, ISCED level 454 and tertiary level leading to EQF level 6, ISCED 554.

To be eligible for higher vocational education the applicant must hold the upper secondary school leaving diploma from upper secondary school (from a general or a vocational programme) or from municipal adult education. The VET provider decides on additional specific entry requirements and many programmes also impose specific entry requirements including, for example, credit for specific courses in upper secondary school or work experience in the field. The provider may also declare an applicant eligible following what is known as an open assessment of qualifications, despite not fulfilling general and/or specific entry requirements. Within higher vocational education, validation may be used to provide a basis for decisions regarding admission to programmes. Knowledge, skills and competences acquired through training, job experience or otherwise may also be validated and recognised as part of a programme. The education provider is responsible for the validation process. So for example, graduates of the three-year general higher education preparatory technology programme (Teknikprogrammet), can study post-secondary vocational applied courses during a fourth year, leading to what is nationally called an upper secondary engineering degree (gymnasieingenjör) which is placed at SeQF level 5 (EQF level 5), ISCED 454. This fourth year of the technology programme is designed to provide learners with vocational skills needed at the labour market. Out of the 26 848 students following the three year – lasting technology programme in the school year 2016/17, only 1.9% (527 students) followed the fourth year.

Higher vocational education is based on the needs of the labour market and thus offered in specific fields where an explicit demand for competence exists. The length of the education programme is specified in higher vocational education credits (yrkeshögskolepoäng) where five credits correspond to one week of full-time studies.
Consequently 200 credits to full-time studies over a year, 400 credits to two years’ full-time studies etc. Most programmes cover two years of full-time studies; approximately one tenth of the programmes are offered as part-time studies.

Higher vocational education should be developed and delivered in close cooperation with working life representatives and education providers (\(^{43}\)). Programmes consist of several courses, in accordance with an education plan drawn up by the education providers. Currently, learners can choose a programme in 16 different fields, offered as 1 965 ongoing programmes in 2017 (\(^{44}\)).

Approximately 90% of the higher VET programmes also offer training in Swedish specific to the vocational field as additional support. Target groups are students with a mother tongue other than Swedish. Swedish is thus integrated with regular teaching. For a programme to be approved by the Swedish National Agency for Higher Vocational Education (Myndigheten för yrkeshögskolan), it must satisfy the skill needs of the labour market (\(^{45}\)). This means that content and focus vary. These programmes should also aim at developing or maintaining professional skills in a narrow vocational area, skills which are of importance to the individual and to society.

A higher VET programme that has been approved may be offered a limited number of times as determined by the Agency for Higher Vocational Education. Then a new application must be filed to the agency to ensure that the competences provided by the programme still meet the needs of the labour market. As from 2017 the Agency for Higher Vocational Education may approve HVET-programmes to be run more times than before, i.e. an increase from up to two times to up to five times. Better continuity gives HVET-providers the possibility to further develop the programmes and strengthen the quality. The possibility to offer partial qualification or stand-alone courses has also been introduced as a complement to higher VET programmes leading to full qualifications.

Higher VET-graduates receive a diploma in higher vocational education (yrkeshögskoleexamen) if they have received at least the lowest passing grade in all courses of the programme, knowledge, skills and competences at EQF level 5 (SeQF Level 5), and has accumulated at least 200 higher vocational education credits. Graduates receive an advanced diploma in higher vocational education (kvalificerad yrkeshögskoleexamen) if they have received at least the lowest passing grade in all courses included in the programme, has attained knowledge, skills, and competences at a EQF level 6 (SeQF Level 6), have accumulated at least 400 higher vocational education credits and have completed a diploma project. A minimum of 25% workplace

\(^{43}\) Sveriges Riksdag, (2009). Chapter 1, Section 6 in of the Act on Higher Vocational Education Act

\(^{44}\) Kortfattad statsistik 2017. [link to source]

training must also have been included in the programme \(^{(46)}\). The credit system differs from that of academic education and credits cannot automatically be transferred from Higher VET to an academic institution. Each university, however, has the right to validate and transfer the credits from higher VET if it is deemed appropriate.

### 2.3.2.2. Participation

In 2017 there were 50,300 individuals studying in higher VET. In 2016 the completion rate of 12,700 individuals in higher VET was 73%, or 79% for women and 67% for men. 13,000 students attained a higher VET qualification in 2015 \(^{(47)}\). In 2017, 93% of the students were employed one year after graduation. 68% of those employed had a job that fully or to a large extent complied with the HVET programme, and 91% expressed satisfaction with their education \(^{(48)}\).

During the past years several changes in higher vocational education have been implemented to strengthen the quality of HVET and ease the entrance to HVET-programmes. Widening the path to higher vocational education is one of the many initiatives the Government is taking to promote matching and strengthen skills supply in the labour market. Aimed at giving more people the opportunity to apply to higher VET, an option to offer preparatory courses that confer eligibility for admission has been introduced within higher vocational education. Furthermore, effective 2017, the Government has instituted a right to municipal adult education (komvux) courses that confer eligibility for admission to other studies. The decision gives adults the right to study within municipal adult education to attain general and specific admission requirements and prerequisite knowledge requirements for higher academic education as well as for higher VET.

### 2.3.2.3. Learning in the workplaces (LIA)

All higher VET programmes combine school-based learning with learning in a work environment (Lärande i arbetslivet – LIA). At the beginning of 2016, the Government decided on changes in the Higher Vocational Education Ordinance \(^{(49)}\), increasing the education providers’ responsibility for LIA. As from April 2016 VET providers in higher vocational education have to ensure that there are sufficient, relevant and high quality work placements. The training must be organised as an integrated part of the programme and its main purpose is to make it possible for the student to connect theoretical and practical knowledge by creating a real life educational setting. In

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\(^{(47)}\) Kortfattad statistik 2017, MyH

https://www.myh.se/Documents/Statistik/Yrkesh%e3%b6skoleutbildningar/Kortfattad%20statistik/Kortfattad_statistik_Yrkesh%e3%b6skolan_2017.pdf

\(^{(48)}\) Ibid.

advanced higher vocational education, at least one quarter of the education period must be carried out as LIA. By means of LIA, students are given the opportunity to obtain solid working life experience, and to make contacts which may lead to work after graduation. As in other courses, education providers must draw up a syllabus for LIA. This will show the goals students are expected to achieve, and how education providers evaluate knowledge, skills and competences. The goals of a LIA course must be formulated so that they contribute to the overall education goals and qualifications required for future professional roles.

2.3.2.4. Providers
The higher VET programmes are run by various education providers who must apply to the Agency for Higher Vocational Education to be approved as providers. The education providers can be private education companies, municipalities, counties, universities or other tertiary education providers. Since 2017 state agencies can also provide higher vocational education. Employers and industry representatives play a significant role in the planning of a higher VET programme and in its content. In contrast to upper secondary vocational education, the education providers determine the content of the programmes in higher vocational education. In their applications, education providers also include information about the companies or organisations which have actively participated in planning for and developing the programme. The goals and orientation of the education and training programmes have to be expressed in terms of knowledge, skills and competences which students need to have attained on completion. Information about the courses included and assessment criteria must also be given. The Swedish Agency for Higher Vocational Education independently determines, following an application procedure, which programmes are to be included as higher vocational education. The agency also supervises the programmes through inspections and quality auditing.

2.4 Other forms of training

There are many other players providing both initial and continuing VET. In most cases this relates to non-formal education arranged by private education companies and labour market partners. Training is financed through fees or by companies and organisations, but public grants are also provided. Even though these forms of VET are not part of government-regulated VET provision, providers may, as of January 2016, affiliate their qualifications (50) to the Swedish national qualifications framework, SeQF.

(50) The affiliation concerns the qualification. Credit transfer to formal education is not possible without a validation process.
By June 2018 six education providers had diplomas or certificates of their education provision affiliated with the SeQF-framework (51).

2.4.1. Education in working life

Issues concerning competence development or training in the workplace are often regulated in agreements between the labour market partners, either nationally or locally. In some areas, the labour market partners cooperate in vocational boards (yrkesnämnder) and competence councils (kompetensråd). They may be responsible for deciding on apprenticeship periods, carrying out trade and journeyman examinations and issuing trade certificates. Industry organisations also develop validation models for professions within their industry. These models can be used to meet the industry's skills needs, or to enhance an individual's employability or capacity to run their own business.

On completion of upper secondary education VET some industries require a so-called 'completing-education period' (färdigutbildning) before the person can take trade or journeyman examinations or receive a trade certificate. This period consists of a work placement or apprenticeship. Individuals not holding an upper secondary qualification in the sector may receive all their training as an apprentice in a company. Duration varies depending on the profession, but can be up to five years. Salaries are often lower, both for those who are engaged in their 'completing-education period' and company apprentices.

For the past few years employer and employee organisations in several sectors have signed work introduction agreements (yrkesintroduktionsanställningar). They aim at facilitating young people’s (under 24 years of age) transition from school to working life and safeguarding long-term skills supply for companies. Most of these agreements are based on the principle that employers offer young people who are lacking professional experience coaching and training during part of their working time. Normally the young person will hold a full-time position but the salary will amount to 75% of a full-time job as part of the time will consist of vocational training. Training content has to be clearly defined and a supervising trainer appointed by the enterprise. Interest in such positions has increased slowly since the introduction of financial incentives at the beginning of 2014. From its inception up to 2017, a total of around 3,740 work introduction agreements have been granted (52). From 1 June 2016 the work introduction agreements are also open to long term unemployed people and the newly arrived immigrants aged 25 and over.

(51) Both qualifications of government regulated education and non-formal education that is affiliated with the SeQF are available in a search engine of the Agency for Higher Vocational Education. See: https://www.seqf.se/sv/Sa-funkar-det/Sok-kvalifikation/
(52) YA-delegationens (2018).
Companies fully or partially cover the cost of continuous professional development (CPD) of staff. Staff training can take place either during or outside working hours. This may cover participation in education, conferences, seminars and workshops, and also the introduction of new work tasks and self-study. In 2012, 70% of employees aged 16–64 took part in some form of staff training. The most common training inputs were found in public sectors and education fields in which more than 80% of the staff had taken part in CPD. The lowest level of participation was in agriculture, forestry and fishing, in which one third of the employees had participated in CPD during the year (Statistics Sweden, 2015).

2.4.2. Liberal (non-formal) adult education

Sweden has a long tradition of liberal adult education (folkbildning), a type of non-formal learning which is typified by being ‘free and voluntary’, offered outside the school system. Liberal adult education covers education in folk high schools (folkhögskolor) and adult education associations (studieförbund) that are not restricted to state-determined curricula or syllabuses. Each folk high school or adult education association decides on the content and organisation of their own educational offerings. Folk high schools provide shorter and longer special courses. One to three-year VET programmes are special courses for specific professions, e.g. journalist, recreation leader, treatment assistant, cantor or sign language interpreter. Both shorter and longer courses in crafts as well as art, music and drama are also common. Some vocational education is at post-secondary level and has special admission requirements, while others are at upper secondary level.

Adult education associations mainly provide shorter and longer study circles (studiecirkel) across a very broad area. Programmes in truck driving and bookkeeping are examples of vocationally-oriented study circles, which are often provided in the evenings or at weekends. One policy measure within the framework of liberal adult education is VET courses or programmes for long-term unemployed people aged 25 to 64 which are offered by the Swedish National Council of Adult Education (Folkbildningsrådet) in cooperation with the employment service. The duration of these programmes could be maximum of two years and should be offered in sectors where there is a lack of skilled labour.

2.4.3. Labour market policy programmes

The Swedish Public Employment Service, PES (Arbetsförmedlingen), is responsible for a number of different activities and programmes aimed at strengthening the individual's opportunities to obtain or keep a job. Programmes are regulated through the Labour

(53) The study circle (studiecirkel) is the most important form of study in the study associations and has a strong participatory approach. In a study circle, a small group meets to learn together based on a study plan with a study circle leader.
Market Policy Programmes Act (54) and four ordinances (55). Several of the programmes consist of vocationally-oriented education or various forms of work placement.

Labour market training (arbetsmarknadsutbildning) is a form of vocationally-oriented training. The training aims at strengthening the individual's opportunities to obtain or keep a job, and also to make it easier for employers to obtain the labour they need with the necessary competence. Unemployed people are offered training in professions where there is a shortage of labour to encourage economic growth. Labour market training usually lasts for a maximum of six months.

The labour market training (56) programmes consist of different types of activities such as education and training initiatives, labour market training and work placement and the job guarantee for youth. The structure of these programmes is influenced by the economic situation and the situation in the labour market.

The programmes are available for those over the age of 25 who are registered with the PES and are unemployed or at risk of becoming unemployed. Youths with physical disabilities and newly arrived immigrants can participate in the programmes before they turn 25. Participants get financial support from the state. Almost 34,950 individuals took part in labour market training in 2017, a decrease of 25% compared to the previous year (57). Traditional gender divisions are evident in these labour market programmes. Two thirds of the participants are men (58). The PES is also, under the umbrella of labour market training, offering work placements and competence evaluation. Validation has been part of the labour market training programmes since 2016.

An ordinance on education contracts (59), agreements between young people, the employment services and the home municipality came into effect in 2015. It

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(58) ibid
enables unemployed young people aged 20-24 who lack an upper secondary qualification to start or return to studies in order to acquire an upper secondary qualification. Studies within the education contract can be combined with work or practical work experience. According to the regulations, the Public Employment Service has to establish local cooperation agreements with the municipalities. This local agreement should include a mapping and an analysis of the scope of youth unemployment and the needs of the young people concerned.

The 16 to 24 year olds who have been unemployed for three months are eligible for the job guarantee for youth. The purpose of this job guarantee is to offer young people individual employment measures at an early stage in order for them to get a job or to begin or resume education as quickly as possible. The job guarantee for youth was launched in 2007, but has been revised and today is part of the Swedish strategies to implement the Youth Guarantee and made available through the PES. Activities include early activation measures such as enhanced support and placement assistance, study motivation courses, education and work experience.

Introduction jobs (introduktionsjobb) is a new measure from 2018 that aims to give financial support to employers who hire someone who is new to, or far away from, the labour market. The programme is open to those who are part of the job and development guarantee, the job guarantee for youth and are over 20, and to newly arrived immigrants over 20 years of age.

2.4.4. Private VET

There are many private companies and other organisations providing VET. This may involve anything across the spectrum, from short courses for a couple of days to longer programmes of one to two years. There is no state regulation or quality assurance for these education programmes. In some cases, however, the training input may be approved by an industry organisation and may lead to the student taking a journeyman or final examination. Successful completion of some programmes allows the learner to acquire a qualification or diploma. Fees are paid by the individual or the employer if the training is provided as part of a competence development measure. Since 2016 private VET-providers can affiliate their qualifications to the Swedish national qualifications framework, SeQF.

(60) https://www.arbetsformedlingen.se/For-arbetsgivare/Anstall-med-stod/Vara-anstallningsstod/Introduktionsjobb.html
2.5 VET funding

2.5.1. Upper secondary VET

Municipalities in Sweden are responsible for providing primary and secondary education to their residents, but the residents are free to choose an education provider. Municipal and central government tax revenues provide the funding for primary and secondary education and municipal and independent schools are equally entirely financed by public funds. The major part of school funding comes from municipal tax revenues, but parts also come from central government state grants to municipalities. Since access to education should be equal regardless of where in Sweden one lives, several state grants and other equity measures are available to ensure that residents have access to education of the same quality regardless of what municipality they reside in.

All municipalities are guaranteed equivalent financial conditions in accordance with a special equalisation system. The general central government grant is therefore based on a number of different parameters such as population, population structure, social structure and the number of immigrants. Each municipality determines how it will allocate resources as this general central government grant is not earmarked and is supplemented by targeted central government grants for specific initiatives, such as apprenticeship education, adult vocational education and projects to develop the quality of work-based learning.

There are considerable differences in calculated cost between the different programmes, with vocational programmes being both the most diverse, and also on the more costly end of the spectrum. The National Agency for Education has developed a system of calculating how much a student should cost on average for a particular programme (riksprislistan). For some programmes there are differences in cost between orientations. This system is used by municipalities when financing education through the voucher system in independent schools. The most costly VET-programme generates a voucher of more than twice as much as the least costly VET-programme (see Figure 8).

Regardless of who the governing body is, both upper secondary school and municipal adult education at upper secondary level are free of charge for the learner. In adult education, however, students must pay for their teaching materials themselves.
Figure 8. **Average voucher cost per upper secondary VET programme per year as determined by the National Agency for Education, 2018**


**NB:** 1 EUR was equivalent to 10.33 SEK on August 7, 2018.

### 2.5.2 Upper secondary adult VET

Municipalities are responsible for adult upper secondary education, but usually source out the education to providers, public or private, on an education market. The Swedish Government has a goal to lower unemployment rates and provides a large share of the municipal funding for adult education through state grants. One part of the governmental strategy is to invest in vocational education and apprentice education for adults in order to counter a shortage of skilled labour, while giving people the opportunity to retrain for a new profession. The strategy also aims to reach groups who have not completed upper secondary education or who have a vocational upper secondary education that needs to be supplemented.

On January 1, 2017 state grants for regional training of adults came in force (61). Regional vocational adult education (*regionalt yrkesvux*) aims to strengthen regional cooperation to better meet labour market needs. The regulation contains provisions on government grants for such training at the secondary level in municipal adult education if it is carried out in cooperation between a number of municipalities and employers and can include combined studies in Swedish as a second language and VET. The total state grant to municipal adult VET for 2018 is SEK 1.989 billion for

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37 800 full time students which is corresponding to 192.5 million Euro (62) so about 5 093 EUR per student.

2.5.3. Higher VET

Higher vocational education programmes may be organised by state higher education institutions, municipalities, county councils and individuals or legal entities. These programmes are partially financed through public funding and are free of charge for the student with an exception for minor costs for a particular reason like a study visit and for teaching materials. Students who attend publicly-funded programmes are eligible for student aid.

The Swedish National Agency for Higher Vocational Education (Myndigheten för yrkeshögskolan) approves and allocates state grants in response to applications from education providers. A programme that has been approved may be offered a limited number of times as determined by the agency. Then a new application must be made to the agency to ensure that the competences provided by the programme meet the needs of the labour market.

2.5.4. Liberal (non-formal) adult education

Today there are approximately 150 folk high schools (folkhögskolor) in Sweden. The majority of these are run by non-governmental organisations, non-commercial organisations, foundations or associations and trade unions, but county councils and regions can also be their governing bodies. The 10 largest adult education associations are also run by non-governmental organisations, associations and other organisations. Study circles and other activities are often provided by local or regional associations.

Liberal adult education is largely financed through support from the state, regions and municipalities. State support makes up around 70% of the grants to adult education associations and to folk high schools. Conditions for state grants to folk high schools and adult education associations are regulated in the State Grants for Adult Education Ordinance (63). The Swedish National Council of Adult Education (Folkbildningsrådet), a non-profit association, has been tasked by the Government to distribute grants, and also to follow up and evaluate activities. Tuition in folk high schools is free of charge and in certain cases gives the right to student aid. However,

(62) The state grants to adult municipal VET awarded for 2018 amounted to SEK 1.579 billion which corresponds to 32 914 full time students and SEK 280 million was awarded for apprentices in municipal adult VET which corresponds to 3 154 full time students for one year. In addition, SEK 130 million was awarded in state grants to education of professional drivers which corresponds to 1732 full time students for one year (1 EUR was equivalent to 10.33 SEK as of August 7, 2018.)

participants are required to pay for course literature, study material, lunch and any eventual residential costs. Study circles and other activities run by adult education associations are subject to fees and do not qualify for student aid.

2.6 VET governance

2.6.1. Upper secondary VET

A distinct feature of the Swedish education system is that primary and secondary education is a goal-steered system with a high degree of local responsibility. The Swedish Parliament, the Government and the National Agency for Education draw up the overall national goals in the legislation, but the main responsibility of funding lies with the municipalities, and provision is the responsibility of the municipalities and the organisers of independent schools. See Table 3 for a summary of governance and responsibilities.

In addition to the public municipal bodies, private entities may also be approved as organisers and run independent upper secondary schools after approval from the Swedish Schools Inspectorate. Independent schools are regulated by the same legislation and governing documents as municipal schools and may offer both VET and higher education preparatory programmes. School organisers have a primary responsibility for distributing resources and organising activities so that students attain the national goals.

Within the framework of the national vocational upper secondary programmes, there is scope for flexibility and local adaptation. The core content, which consists of foundation subjects, programme specific subjects and orientations, is nationally determined by the Government (see Figure 5). The foundation subjects are the same for all VET students, the programme specific subjects are the same for all students in one of the programmes, and the courses in orientations are the same for students in an orientation within a programme.

In addition, there are programme specialisations. The National Agency for Education determines which courses and subjects adhere to the diploma goals of the programmes and makes these available for each programme specialisation. Schools can combine these different courses to create programme specialisations that meet the regional and local needs of the labour market and enable students to focus their studies on a specific vocational outcome. Formally the local adaptations in programme specialisations are decided by the organiser’s governing board, i.e. the local government for state schools, and by the school organiser for independent schools.
2.6.2. Higher VET

Employers and industry representatives play a significant role in the planning of a higher VET programme and have an influence on its content. In contrast to upper secondary vocational education, the education providers determine the content of the programmes in higher vocational education. The goals and orientation of the education and training programmes are expressed in terms of knowledge, skills and competences which students need to have attained on completion. Information about the courses included and assessment criteria must also be given. In their applications, education providers also include information about the companies or organisations which have actively participated in developing and planning the programme. The Swedish Agency for Higher Vocational Education independently determines, following an application procedure, the programmes to be included as higher vocational education.

One important element in higher vocational education is students' involvement in and their opportunities to influence the structure and delivery of the education. Each programme must have a plan to ensure that this is achieved. Teaching and teaching materials are determined by the governing group of the education provider, which is also responsible for carrying out systematic quality monitoring. The Agency of Higher VET also supervises the programmes through inspections and quality auditing. Employers and industry contribute to and influence programme content by participating as lecturers, joining in projects, hosting study visits and offering work placements. In higher vocational education, education must also contribute to developing student competences in entrepreneurship. Higher vocational education may also be run in the form of distance courses.

2.7 Teachers and trainers (64)

2.7.1. Upper secondary VET

The Education Act of 2010 states that a tertiary teaching degree is required to teach upper secondary education. Entry requirements for vocational teacher training are graduation from upper secondary school and mastery of the relevant vocation. The Swedish Council for Higher Education (Universitets- och Högskolerådet, UHR) has specified through an ordinance what entry requirements there are for each vocational subject for vocational teacher training. The ordinance states that specialised knowledge, obtained by experience and theory in the field, is required.

(64) For more information, see Skolverket (2016b). Supporting teachers and trainers for successful reforms and quality of vocational education and training: mapping their professional development in the EU – Sweden. Cedefop ReferNet thematic perspectives series.
Table 3. **Summary of governance and distribution of responsibilities in Swedish upper secondary education (including IVET)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responsible body</th>
<th>Responsibility</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parliament</td>
<td>• Education Act</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Government       | • Ordinances, including the curricula  
|                  | • Diploma goals  
|                  | • Programme specific content and orientations of VET and HE programmes  
|                  | • Syllabuses (foundation subjects) |
| The National Agency for Education | • Content of orientations of VET and HE programmes  
|                  | • Syllabuses (all other subjects)  
|                  | • Regulations  
|                  | • General guidelines  
|                  | • Support to providers |
| Stakeholders, social partners (National programme councils) | • Advice to The National Agency for Education |
| Municipalities   | • Funding |
| Governing bodies of school organisers (municipalities and independent organisers) | • Provision of education |
| The Schools Inspectorate | • Approval of independent schools  
|                  | • Inspections and quality auditing. |

*Source: Skolverket*

A diploma in vocational education can be obtained at 12 Swedish universities by studying for 1.5 years (65). In vocational teacher education there is a core of education methodology, particularly general teaching knowledge and skills, but also induction – practical supervised training in a school. A person without formal teacher training, but otherwise deemed qualified, who is employed as a vocational teacher need to study only for one year at a university to obtain a diploma in vocational education.

Once graduated to qualify as a teacher, the person will need to be certified. Each application is reviewed and assessed by the National Agency for Education based on the rules that applied when the teacher took his or her degree, even if other requirements are applicable today. A teacher’s certificate clearly shows in which types of school, which subjects and which years he or she is qualified to teach. The certificate can be rescinded if a teacher is deemed inept.

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(65) Twelve universities are authorised by the Swedish Higher Education Authority to provide a degree in vocational teaching: University of Gothenburg, Dalarna University, Kristianstad University, University West, University of Gävle, University of Skövde, Karlstad University, Linköping University, Linnaeus University, Malmö University, Stockholm University and Umeå University.
However, due to lack of qualified teachers, teachers in vocational subjects (and foreign mother tongues) are exempt from the requirements. The Government has, however, signalled that its intention is to increase the attractiveness and quality of IVET, and that one measure in the future will be to introduce a certificate requirement for VET teachers.

VET teachers begin their careers as teachers relatively late in life. It is partly a natural effect of the requirement to have experience from the vocation they are going to teach. In 2013, 53% of all VET teachers were aged 50 years or older (66). It is expected that approximately 17 000 VET teachers will need to be hired before 2031, which amounts to 1 130 newly graduated VET teachers annually. During the three academic years between 2014/15 and 2016/17 the number of study positions at the 12 universities having VET teacher programmes has fluctuated between 593 and 667 and the number of graduating students has fluctuated between 444 and 469. In short, the number of students in the VET teacher programmes needs to more than double in the coming decade to meet the demands for competence provision.

With an ageing group that also only works for a short number of years, a small number of new students entering the VET teacher training programme and a present need for recruiting VET teachers, there is a risk that in the future there will be a great shortage of vocational teachers in Sweden. Thus, the challenge is not only to recruit teachers to VET education, but even more, to recruit teachers with formal education and teaching certificates.

Qualified and certified teachers have been viewed as instrumental in improving school results. But there is a pragmatic approach to VET due to a shortage of VET teachers for most vocations. The state has given the National Agency for Education comprehensive missions to raise interest in training to become a VET teacher, to support work-based learning with incentives for practical training instructors in the workplace, and to support VET teachers with CPD. There have been campaigns (67) to promote the recruitment of VET teachers, but so far no evaluations of their effect. Neither has the effectiveness of state grants and other incentives for the promotion of CPD for teachers been evaluated. It is therefore not possible to analyse to what extent the incentives have made a difference. The high number of trainers that have participated in the web-based programme for trainers, however, indicates that the measure is successful.

2.7.2. Higher VET

There are no formal teaching degree requirements for teachers in higher vocational education. The teachers must, however, possess good or very good knowledge and

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(67) E.g. För det vidare – ’pass it on’ http://fordetvidare.se/
experience in their given field. The Higher Vocational Education Act (\textsuperscript{68}) sets out the requirements and states that the education provider needs to have the competence and the conditions needed to provide the particular vocational education and that teachers and trainers hired to perform the task are suitable for the job. Many teachers are recruited directly from the workplace. Some of them have long experience in teaching; others have little or no teaching experience. It is the responsibility of the education provider and the governing group to support teachers in their work.

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{68} Sveriges Riksdag (2009). Lag 2009:128 om yrkeshögskolan.}
CHAPTER 3.
Shaping VET qualifications

3.1 Introduction
VET is of great importance for securing national skills provision. As previously noted, few professions are regulated (69) in Sweden although various forms of industrial certification occur. State authorities can also lay down clearly-stated recommendations about the knowledge and competences necessary to work in a given area (70) but the responsibility for regulating formal vocational education ultimately lies with the Parliament and the Government. The Ministry of Education and Research (Utbildningsdepartementet) is responsible for most education, and in terms of VET, this covers upper secondary school (71), adult education and higher vocational education. A structured cooperation between education and working life is a prioritised development area for Swedish VET.

3.2 Anticipating skill needs
State agencies, like Statistics Sweden (SCB) and the Public Employment Services (PES, Arbetsförmedlingen) monitor the Swedish labour market and publish their analyses regularly. The PES also offers Yrkeskompassen (72), a search engine for predicting future employment prospects for various professions and a list (73) of professions in demand in the various regions of Sweden.

Yet skill needs and the provision of VET are not interlinked in Sweden. The provision of VET (and other upper secondary) programmes in upper secondary school (74) is largely determined by the preferences of the students. Students choose

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(69) See note 18.
(70) For example, the National Swedish Board of Health and Welfare (Socialstyrelsen) sets their guidelines in the ‘Basic knowledge for staff working in care for the elderly in the social services’ for the staff working in this area (Socialstyrelsen, 2011).
(71) See Table 3 for governance responsibilities for IVET.
(72) https://www.arbetsformedlingen.se/For-arbetssokande/Valj-yrke/Yrkeskompassen.html#
(74) In municipal adult education, the governing board of the organiser, i.e. the political body of the municipality, decides which courses the municipality will offer but there is always a right for adults to study courses to become eligible for admission to tertiary education (see Section 2.3.1.10).
their education, and since providers operate in a competitive market, they adjust supply according to the students’ demands. Ideally there would be a balance between the demand for education, the need for competence among the different business sectors on the one hand, and the supply, the provision of educated and skilled workers on the other. Yet there appears to be a gap between demand and supply, i.e. there is a shortage of competence in some sectors and too many people educated in upper secondary school in fields in which there is no shortage. Guidance, information and similar incentives are the ‘soft’ means by which students can be attracted and steered to specific vocational education programmes.

Moreover, there are structural challenges in the Swedish VET-system when it comes to municipalities’ possibilities to offer a broad supply of programmes and specialisations at upper secondary level. Municipalities are sometimes too small entities to be able to offer a wide range of different upper secondary programmes and orientations. Municipalities can cooperate in confederations to coordinate the supply of upper secondary programmes, but challenges remain in this field, particularly when it comes to IVET, due to decreasing interest in VET paired with high costs for organising some VET-programmes. Therefore, a commission of enquiry (75) has been appointed to develop a regionally-based model for financing and steering of education at upper secondary level (including municipal adult education). The commission will present its proposal to the Government in February 2020.

### 3.3 Designing qualifications

#### 3.3.1. Governmental design of the IVET structure

Since very few professions are regulated (see Section 1.4) in Sweden most qualifications are determined by stakeholders and social partners. The Parliament, the Government and state agencies are responsible for education and have set up a structure for education provision to meet the needs of the individual, society and the labour market.

When the present upper secondary school system came into effect in 2011 vocational education became more vocationally-oriented. The most recent upper secondary school reform carried out in autumn 2011 was preceded by a Government commission of enquiry (76). The commission drew up proposals for vocational programmes based on statistics available about upper secondary education and


graduates’ labour market transition, and also through discussions with industry representatives and social partners. In a similar manner, consultations with representatives from working life have been an important part of the work of reforming the upper secondary programmes for learners with intellectual disabilities which was launched in 2013.

In 2014 a new Government commission of enquiry (77) (Yrkesprogramsutredningen) was charged with the task of proposing further development of the upper secondary vocational programmes. The commission analysed how to further develop the involvement of the social partners and employers in VET provision by, for example, developing regional support structures and shifting the main responsibility for IVET from schools to the social partners and workplaces. Another Government commission of enquiry (78) (Gymnasieutredningen) was launched in 2015 which included the aims of studying how VET programmes can provide eligibility for tertiary education and analysing if it would be necessary to adjust the upper secondary programmes and orientations. Proposals from the enquiries are presented to the Government and frequently guide the Government in upcoming missions to the education agencies aimed to develop curricula, syllabuses or to make amendments to the educational structure. The drawing up of governing documents takes place for the most part at the National Agency for Education in close collaboration with different actors and stakeholder groups.

Consultation rounds and open consultation through meetings and websites are examples of methods used to collect views and proposals. If a revision is seen as necessary, the National Agency for Education organises an extensive review process to inform the relevant parties of the decision on a new subject or course. Focus groups of teachers and learners are consulted; the work in progress is published on the agency’s website for teachers and stakeholders to express their opinions; proposals are written and quality assured in the Agency to ensure that the curricula aligns with the legislation. Before the National Agency decides on a new subject or course, other national agencies, interest groups, social partners and stakeholders (including school organisers) receive a copy of the proposed changes and have a chance to comment. If a large section of the consultees or a single influential group are opposed to the proposal, the National Agency for Education may decide not to proceed or to revise the proposal. The same process is used for core and foundation courses which are decided by the Government. In these instances, the National Agency for Education

https://www.regeringen.se/4ac65f/contentassets/1ccc134ebc9645f199fce4c82984ce81/valja-yrke-sou-201597.pdf

https://www.regeringen.se/rattsliga-dokument/statens-offentliga-utredningar/2016/10/sou-201677/
acts on a mission from the Government and makes their proposals to the Government after following the same review process.

When the process of quality assurance of the design, assessment, certification and review of the process is thorough and transparent, it is more likely that the final proposals will be accepted. If everyone concerned has a chance to express their opinions, the proposed educational standards expressed in the documents are more likely to be adjusted to suit the needs of social partners and all relevant stakeholders and to be of a higher quality.

3.3.2. Other stakeholders

In an ongoing structured consultation process, the National Agency for Education meets with schools and stakeholders to ensure that subjects and courses can be used to build qualifications which meet the needs of working life. For each upper secondary vocational programme there is a national programme council with a broad cross-section of industry representatives and social partners in the vocational area for which the programme provides education and training. Some programme councils include representatives from public authorities like the PES. One of the tasks of each programme council is to advise and support the National Agency for Education in relation to the adaptation, development and modernisation of the supply of education and the content of vocational education. This helps to ensure that the competences required by the labour market are met. The programme councils fulfil a consultative function and can suggest revisions but are not decision-making bodies.

At local level, there must be one or several local programme councils (lokala programråd) for cooperation between school and working life for all vocational programmes in every upper secondary school. How these councils are organised and what their tasks are is not regulated. Possible tasks could be, for instance, assisting the provider in arranging placements of work-based learning, and participating in organising and assessing diploma projects. A local programme council may also advise the school about skills needed locally and therefore which courses the school could use in the programme specialisations to meet the local needs.

There are many initiatives for cooperation at the regional level between school and working life, unregulated by the State. For example, actors on the labour market have initiated Teknikcollege (Technical College) and Vård- och omsorgscollege (Health and Medical Care College), a form of cooperation within the framework of upper secondary and tertiary education. Behind the Teknikcollege is the Industrial Council (Industrirådet) and different employer and employee organisations in the technology

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(79) The organisation, Riksöreningen Teknikcollege Sverige, uses the term Teknikcollege in English: http://www.teknikcollege.se/teknikcollege-i-english/.

Since Teknikcollege is used as a brand name, it is not translated in this report.
and industrial sectors. The Teknikcollege (80), a tripartite network in which companies collaborate with municipalities and education providers to promote VET and quality in upper and post-secondary VET. The Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions, (SKL) together with a trade union, the Swedish Municipal Workers’ Union (Kommunal) and the Association of Private Care Providers (Vårdföretagarna), started a similar initiative in a college for health and medical care with a strong focus on ensuring the supply of skilled workers and further training for existing staff, but also increasing quality in work-based learning for young people and adults.

3.3.3. Gap between diplomas and expected upper secondary VET qualifications

Within the structural framework described in Section 2.3.1.1 all upper secondary VET programmes should cover 2500 credits (Figure 5) and last for three years. Typically, courses covering a scope of 1600 credits are allocated to the VET-programmes’ vocational content. There are, however, some industries that argue that there is too little vocational training in the upper secondary education to reach a qualification needed in their sector. In the construction sector, as an example, a learner can reach certification level if she or he has competed 4800 – 6800 hours after graduation from upper secondary education, or 3300 – 5800 hours after completing adult education. The same applies to traditional handicrafts like hairdressers, who must work as employees for 3000 hours before being able to take the exam leading to a journeyman certificate. Therefore, the vocational outcome of the hairdresser orientation of the handicrafts programme only leads to the informal title ‘aspiring hairdresser.’ Final examinations are performed by the hairdressers’ association but the qualification is still placed at the SeQF-level 4 (EQF level 4) based on the level of acquired knowledge, skills, and competences (81).

3.3.4. Partial VET qualifications for adults

In October 2016 the Government commissioned the National Agency for Education to recommend vocational training ‘packages’ for adults. These ‘packages’ are clusters of courses agreed with the industry as entry points into the labour market. They will not only consist of partial qualifications, but will also include building blocks that may be transferred and accumulated towards a full qualification. In April 2017 the mission was amended to include the individualised programmes for learners not eligible for national upper secondary programmes. Fifty-eight packages covering a wide range of vocational areas had been developed by February 2018 but more are continuously developed.

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(80) https://teknikcollege.se/in-english/
(81) The Swedish ordinance defining SeQF uses the term ‘competences’ for the EQF category ‘responsibility and autonomy.’
3.3.5. Designing qualifications in higher VET

In accordance with legislation and within the restrictions of funding allocations for higher vocational education programmes (yrkeshögskoleutbildningar) the Swedish National Agency for Higher Vocational Education (Myndigheten för yrkeshögskolan) independently determines, following an application procedure, the programmes to be included as higher vocational education. In contrast to upper secondary vocational education, it is the education providers who design the programmes in higher vocational education.

Programmes in higher vocational education must correspond to the needs of the labour market. For this reason, the Swedish National Agency for Higher Vocational Education analyses and collects information about the skills in short supply in different industries and regions. The information is then used, together with the VET provider’s application, as a basis for assessing the programmes that are to be available in higher vocational education. External stakeholders such as employers and industry organisations, as well as central and regional authorities, also play an important contributory role in supplying information to the assessment and decision-making processes. The qualification demands imposed by employers and industries thus determine the programmes to be approved, where in Sweden they are offered and how many study places are allocated to each programme.

The Labour Market Council (arbetsmarknadsråd) is a special body linked to the Swedish National Agency for Higher Vocational Education. The task of the Council is to support the agency with information about the labour market: the vocational areas under development, the new qualifications that may be required, and the qualifications that need to be phased out. The members of the council, which is chaired by the head of the agency, are representatives of the PES and the social partners. The Council members also functions as a channel to their respective organisations in terms of synchronising the analyses.

For education and training programmes that require nationally equivalent content, the Swedish National Agency for Higher Vocational Education issues regulations on what knowledge, skills and competences all students must have attained on completion.

3.4 Recognition of prior learning

Within municipal adult education at upper secondary level, validation is possible within all courses and must be based on the student’s preconditions and needs. A student who has validated part of a course does not have to attend classes for that part of the course (see also Section 2.3.1.5, Validation.)
In March 2018 the National Agency for Education launched a skills mapping web-based tool (82) for people who have professional work experience from other countries in, or equivalent. The tool assists individuals to become aware of their skills, which in turn can shorten their study time and contribute to improved integration through access to the labour market. It provides information of core content and knowledge requirements for courses in the upper secondary education system in several languages. At the time of the launch the tool was available in English, Arabic, Persian and Somali.

The National Delegation for Validation was appointed in 2015 by the Swedish Government and consists of social partners and national agency representatives. Its task is to develop a strategy of coordinated development of validation on the national and regional level. This strategy is intended to contribute to a transparent and efficient system in which actors in the education system, labour market and the social partners cooperate. A report on coordinated development of validation will be presented to the Government in December 2019.

### 3.5 Quality assurance

The extent to which the state governs the goals and contents of formal VET varies between different education forms. Table 4 shows the various responsibilities of agencies and governing bodies for controlling VET provision and assuring its quality.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Diploma/education</th>
<th>Responsible for goals and contents</th>
<th>Responsible for awarding diploma certificates</th>
<th>Responsible for quality assurance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vocational diploma at upper secondary level</td>
<td>Government; The National Agency for Education</td>
<td>School's/education provider's headmaster/director</td>
<td>The governing body of the school provider; The Swedish Schools Inspectorate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diploma in higher vocational education and Advanced diploma in higher vocational education</td>
<td>Education providers</td>
<td>Education providers</td>
<td>Education providers; Swedish National Agency for Higher Vocational Education</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Skolverket

(82) https://kartlaggningsverktyget.skolverket.se/start
3.5.1. Upper secondary VET

All school organisers’ governing bodies are required by law to have a systematic quality assurance process in place. The quality assurance arrangements are not regulated in detail but it is common for schools to use indicators such as average grades, participation rates, completion rates and placement rates in their analysis. Most organisers also survey their learners’ opinions on the education, facilities and their well-being.

Responsibility for supervision and quality auditing of both upper secondary school and municipal adult education rests with the Swedish Schools Inspectorate (Skolinspektionen). Regular supervision of schools is carried out on the basis of a number of assessment areas and points, whilst quality auditing follows up a specific area. Vocational education, and especially apprenticeship education, is very much in focus within both regular supervision and quality auditing. Structured cooperation between education providers and the workplace has shown to be an important factor for success in work-based learning.

Even though the education providers are responsible for carrying out systematic quality assessment, the Government supports and stimulates the development of quality in VET via different initiatives and specific funding schemes. This may include specific tasks delegated to the Swedish National Agency, for example, to develop guidelines for work-based learning. Also, the Government has decided on an extensive funding scheme consisting of grants to schools wishing to develop the quality of work-based learning.

3.5.2. Tertiary VET

Programmes in higher vocational education are supervised by the Swedish National Agency for Higher Vocational Education (Myndigheten för yrkeshögskolan) through inspections and quality auditing. Programmes are checked for compliance with existing legislation and other provisions. The Agency performs three different types of inspections: introductory, regular and ad-hoc inspections following up particular issues or problems.

 Introductory inspection is carried out for new programmes that start or have just started. The aim of such inspections is to determine whether there are the preconditions in place to deliver new, good quality programmes. Ad-hoc inspections are carried out if there are complaints from a student about the education programme itself or the education provider. The ad-hoc inspections only examine the complaint area.

3.5.3. Qualifications outside the formal education system

Bodies outside the formal education system that have their qualifications placed in the National Qualifications Framework, must apply systematic quality assurance processes
in their education programmes. Their quality assurance process must be described in their application according to the EQAVET system.

3.5.4. Swedish qualification framework - SeQF

The Swedish qualification framework (83) has eight levels and is based on learning outcomes. Learning outcomes (84) in upper secondary education are expressed in the curricula, diploma goals and subject syllabuses which describe the aim and long-term goals of the subject, the core content and assessment criteria in the knowledge requirements for each of the courses. Learning outcomes in Swedish upper secondary education are expressed as the students' 'ability to', 'knowledge about', 'understanding of' and 'skills in'. Knowledge requirements relate to these outcomes and are expressed using active verbs. Programmes in Higher Vocational Education are designed to satisfy the skill needs of the labour market. This means that content and focus vary. These programmes should also aim at developing or maintaining professional skills in a narrow vocational area, skills which are of importance to the individual and to society. It is the provider that, in collaboration with employers and industry, decides on the learning outcome of a programme.

The Swedish National Agency for Higher Vocational Education (Myndigheten för Yrkeshögskolan) has been appointed by the Swedish Government as the national coordination point for the Swedish NQF, the SeQF. All government regulated education is referred to the SeQF in an ordinance (85). Qualification awarding bodies outside the formal education system may also apply to the agency to refer their qualification to the SeQF. A precondition is that the awarding body conducts systematic quality assurance of the qualification. A group of experts reviews the application and serves as an advisory body to the Director General who determines the SeQF-level of the qualification. These decisions are valid for ten years.

83) https://www.seqf.se/
84) What a learner is expected to know, be able to do and understand at the end of a learning sequence.
CHAPTER 4.
Promoting participation in VET

4.1 Incentives for VET learners

Individuals with different backgrounds and in different life situations are given the possibility to study, thanks to a system of study allowances and student aid. Students have the right to different forms of financial support for both upper secondary and tertiary studies. Also, employees have the right to take leave of absence to attend education.

Swedish study support gives everyone the opportunity to study, irrespective of their financial background. The form and the size of the support vary depending on age and life situation and also on the scope and level of studies. The Swedish Board for Study Support (Centrala Studiestödsnämnden, CSN) is responsible for and administers most of the student support. The education programmes entitled to support are determined by the Swedish Government through the Study Support Ordinance (86). Special investments in higher levels of grants are used as an incentive for further studies. This applies, for instance, to the initiative for higher grants to students in vocational education for adults, where one aim is to encourage more unemployed people over the age of 25 to apply for vocational education. The support is part of the education policy and aims to grant equal access to education for both men and women. It also aims to level out differences between individuals and groups in the population and contribute to increased social justice. In 2018 more than 475 000 individuals aged 20 and above received financial support. Out of these almost 60% were women and 23% received support for studies at upper secondary level. Of all adults studying at post-secondary level and receiving support, 12% were studying in a HVET-programme (87).

4.1.1. Study allowance for students under the age of 20

Study allowance (studiehjälp) in the form of student grants, supplementary allowance and boarding supplement can be paid to students under the age of 20 who are


(87) CSN-report Studiestödet 2018: https://www.csn.se/download/18.2020cba016a03060f9726e/1555075355558/Studiest%C3%B6det%202018%20webb.pdf
studying in upper secondary school, municipal adult education or folk high schools. The grant, under certain circumstances, can also be awarded for studies abroad. One prerequisite for receiving this grant is that the student studies full time and participates in the relevant courses. This means, for example, that a student who is frequently absent runs the risk of losing the support and may be liable for repayment. The school has an obligation to report to the Swedish Board for Study Support when a student is absent without a valid reason.

Students who wish to live and study in a place other than their home municipality may apply for a boarding supplement from the Swedish Board for Study Support or from the municipality. For example, this applies in cases where the specific education is not provided by the home municipality, or where the education programme is open to national admission. The grant makes it possible for students to participate in specialist vocational education that is provided at only a few places in the country. In 2014 a supplement for students attending apprenticeship education (lärlingsutbildning) in upper secondary school was introduced. The supplement is designed to cover extra living costs, for example travel to the workplace and lunch. As of July 2014 students attending apprenticeship education in upper secondary school may be employed in what is called an upper secondary apprentice position (Gymnasial lärlingsanställning, GLA). As a result, upper secondary apprentices can be offered employment while still in education, in accordance with adapted labour law provisions. An apprentice employed in such a position is remunerated by the employer and not entitled to the supplement.

4.1.2. Students aged 20 and above

Student aid (studiemedel) can be granted to students in post-secondary education, such as higher vocational education, supplementary education, and vocational education in folk high schools. Students studying at upper secondary level who have reached the age of 20 are also entitled to student aid. They can apply for grants and loans and also for certain supplementary allowances. Parents of minors, for example, can receive a supplementary allowance. To be eligible for further funding students must demonstrate satisfactory results in previous studies. The contribution for full-time students is at most 723 SEK (70.13 EUR as of 13.6.2019) per week and the loan at most 2 720 SEK (263.85 EUR as of 13.6.2019) per week. The loan has a low interest rate (at 0.13% age points in 2018).

Despite the generous study support system there is still a part of the population refraining from education due to economic reasons. The Government has therefore introduced a new study allowance, the education entry grant (88), that could be

(88) Studiestartsstöd
https://www.csn.se/bidrag-och-lan/studiestod/studiestartsstod.html
distributed by the Municipalities since mid-2017. The education entry grant is designed to recruit unemployed people, aged 25-56, with short previous education who need education at the primary or upper-secondary level to strengthen their ability to establish themselves on the labour market.

4.1.3. Learners in adult education and training

The Swedish Government has been implementing a major education initiative for lifelong learning and higher employment since 2015. The education initiative involves state-funded training places in vocational adult education programmes at upper secondary level, higher vocational education, education at folk high schools as well as at universities and colleges. The objective of the initiative is mainly re-skilling and up-skilling unemployed people and reaching out to adults lacking upper secondary education, or having a secondary vocational education needed to be completed. Expanding the number of training places also provides adults with a general education increased opportunity to enrol in VET. A substantial part of the initiative has been targeted towards upper secondary VET and apprenticeships for adults.

VET has traditionally been organised by each municipality. To stimulate the development towards a broad supply of education and training corresponding to the needs in the different regions, the Government altered the conditions and introduced a new state grant in 2017, replacing previous state grants targeting vocational training and apprenticeships. The current state grant requires cooperation between at least three municipalities on the planning and supply of education and training at the regional level. The needs of the labour market should be met and planning should therefore also be made in consultation with the Public Employment Services and with different actors responsible for regional development.

Since 2009, Sweden's municipalities have had the opportunity to apply for state subsidies for an expanded implementation of VET for adults. In January 2016, the number of available student places was expanded for the target group in need of vocational training combined with studies in Swedish for immigrants or Swedish as a second language.

As of January 2017, constellations of three municipalities or more have been able to apply for state subsidies for adult VET to enable a broader range of potential students (see above). These subsidies can be combined with courses in Swedish for immigrants or Swedish as a second language at compulsory school level. The aim is to provide newly arrived adults with the opportunity to enrol in vocational education, thereby contributing to improved integration through access to the labour market.

4.1.4. Financial support for disadvantaged groups

For the past few years, employer and employee organisations in several sectors have signed work introduction agreements (yrkesintroduktionsanställningar),
Section 2.4, Education in working life). They aim at facilitating young (15-24 years of age) people’s transition from school to working life and safeguarding the long-term skills supply for companies. Most of these agreements are based on the principle that young people lacking professional experience are offered coaching and training during part of their working time. Normally the young person will hold a full-time position but the salary will amount to 75% of a full-time job as part of the time will consist of vocational training. The training content has to be clearly defined and have a supervising trainer appointed by the enterprise. From 1 June 2016 the introduction agreements will also be open to long-term unemployed people and newly arrived immigrants who are older than 25 (89).

A minimum wage according to the collective agreement between the social partners of the employment sector is paid by the employer to the employee.

4.2 Incentives for enterprises

State grants are predominately given to the governing board of education providers, even though the grants are intended to finance support activities in the enterprises. Some state grants, however, are directed directly to enterprises, like the regional funds available to stakeholder organisations to support quality improvement of WBL or for measures intended to promote an interest in becoming a VET-teacher (90).

4.2.1 Disadvantaged groups

Employers who are involved in the work introduction agreements (yrkesintroduktionsanställningar) and offer coaching and training to young disadvantaged learners (Section 4.1.4) receive financial support. The Public Employment Services, covers the employment taxes of 31.42% paid by the employer and a compensation of SEK 115 per day (11 EUR as of 10.4.2019) for the trainer in the workplace. Interest in such positions has increased slowly since the introduction of financial incentives at the beginning of 2014 (91).

4.3 Guidance and counselling

Decreasing interest in upper secondary vocational programmes has led to an increased focus on, and investment in, information activities and study and career guidance. Ongoing changes in VET create the need for information and guidance to provide everyone with an overall view of the available study paths and what they can lead to. Increasing the attractiveness and quality of VET is an important priority for the Swedish Government.

Information and guidance about study and career paths is integrated into different activities. The curriculum \(^{92}\) for upper secondary education states that the head teacher is responsible for ensuring that ‘study and guidance counselling is organised in such a way that students receive information and guidance prior to making study choices in the school, and before choosing their future education paths and professions’, and one of the explicit goals of the curriculum is that all students ‘are familiar with the conditions of working life, especially within their study area, as well as the opportunities for further education, work placement and work in Sweden and other countries.’ The curriculum for compulsory school mirrors the curriculum in upper secondary school regarding study and guidance counselling and a new legislation to provide practical vocational orientation (\textit{Praktisk yrkesorientering, PRAO}) in compulsory school came into effect in 2018 \(^{93}\). The vocational orientation is compulsory and requires that learners in years eight and nine spend a minimum of 10 days in a workplace or, if the school cannot provide sufficient work-placements, in a vocational programme in upper secondary school.

The governing body or education provider has the main responsibility for guiding and recruiting students for VET. Overall information on study and career paths, and on the labour market for different professions, is supplied by national authorities and industry organisations. Both the National Agency for Education and the Swedish National Agency for Higher Vocational Education are tasked to inform and disseminate knowledge about their respective areas. The National Agency for Education also functions as a national reference point for information on VET in Sweden and other EU countries, as well as countries in the EEA area.

Many national websites provide information and guidance for young people and adults. The portal \textit{Utbildningsinfo.se} \(^{94}\) includes search tools for educational paths and providers. The site contains information about possible vocational outcomes, the situation on the labour market in the field, and funding and information on other important considerations when choosing a study path.


\(^{94}\) http://www.utbildningsinfo.se
Information provided by the Swedish Public Employment Service focuses on finding jobs in different professions. The portal entitled *Yrkeskompassen* (The Occupational Compass) (95) shows the labour market situation and future prospects for about 200 professions and contains information about national forecasts for 1, 5 and 10-year periods. One-year forecasts are also available at the regional level. The Occupational Compass also provides descriptions of different professions and possible education paths.

The Swedish National Council of Adult Education (*Folkbildningsrådet*) is responsible for the Information Services of the Swedish Folk High Schools (*Folkhögskolornas informationstjänst*) whose tasks include contributing to the recruitment of course participants. The portal *Folkhögskola.nu* (96) provides overall information on vocational education and other courses given by folk high schools.

Vocational boards (*yrkesnämnder*) and other industry organisations supply information about professions and career paths through different means, and also about formal and non-formal education in their fields (97). This may cover websites, participation in industry specific trade fairs or inspiration days.

All these activities and web portals must also function to support study and vocational guidance counsellors in their work. Euroguidance Sweden is a national resource centre for counselling, which supports counsellors in their work of providing information about opportunities for studying and work placement abroad.

The municipalities are responsible for ensuring that young people and adults are offered education at upper secondary level. Before students choose upper secondary school, many municipalities and regions take part in upper secondary fairs and open houses where schools and programmes are presented. Information meetings and guidance counselling are offered to those who wish to study in municipal adult education at upper secondary level. Frequently education providers market their education and courses via advertisements, websites and direct marketing.

The Swedish National Agency for Education has developed the following web-based tools as a service to students, teachers, guidance counsellors and other stakeholders in upper secondary education. The web-based system was launched on 1st March, 2018. The Skills Mapping Tool described in Section 3.4 can be used to assist students and other stakeholders in the planning of an upper secondary education diploma within the framework of municipal adult education. Target groups are people who have experience in professional work, or equivalent experiences, and need to have their vocational skills and competences validated. The tool is specifically

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(95) [http://www.arbetsformedlingen.se/For-arbetssokande/Yrke-och-framtid/Yrkeskompassen.html](http://www.arbetsformedlingen.se/For-arbetssokande/Yrke-och-framtid/Yrkeskompassen.html)

(96) [http://www.folkhogskola.nu](http://www.folkhogskola.nu)

(97) For example, The Building Industry's Vocational Board, [http://www.byn.se/byn/default.asp](http://www.byn.se/byn/default.asp) and Svensk Handel's career web, [http://www.karriarihandeln.se/](http://www.karriarihandeln.se/)
adapted to newly arrived individuals and is aimed to assist in making more individuals aware of their skills, which in turn can shorten their study time and contribute to improved integration through access to the labour market. The Skills Mapping Tool is useful both in adult education and in upper secondary school, for young new arrivals with work experience and can also contribute to improved transitions between upper secondary school and municipal adult education.

Guidance counselling is also an important task of the Public Employment Service (Arbetsförmedlingen) aimed at improving matching between job seekers and working life. In addition to the Occupational compass referred to above, job seekers are offered study and vocational guidance through e.g. brief telephone coaching sessions, or personal meetings with a counsellor at drop-in sessions. The public employment service is also responsible for what are called preparatory activities (förberedande insatser) aimed at facilitating job seekers’ choice of work. The initiatives are tailored to the individuals and may be of a counselling, rehabilitation or orientation nature. They are intended for job seekers who need to prepare themselves for a labour market policy programme or a job.

The Higher Vocational Education Ordinance (Förordningen om yrkeshögskolan) lays down the responsibility of the governing bodies of the education providers for ensuring that there is guidance and counselling concerning alternative study paths, admissions and entry, as well as vocational guidance. In their application to deliver education within the framework of higher vocational education, education providers must describe how this counselling will be provided. Student fairs, where information on higher vocational education providers, universities and university colleges is presented, are held regionally and in cooperation with education providers and the social partners. There are also industry-specific trade fairs, where education at both upper secondary and tertiary level is presented.

General information about higher vocational education is available through the website of the Swedish National Agency for Higher Vocational Education (98). The Agency also provides a website intended for potential students (99). Besides general information about higher vocational education, this website contains information about current higher vocational education programmes and links to various education provider websites. Information about higher education studies is made available through the portal studera.nu (100).

Study and career guidance is readily available for students at all levels of the education system. There is however, a challenge to reach those individuals who do not actively participate in education. Outreach and guidance measures to youth and young

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(98) http://www.myh.se
(99) http://www.yrkeshogskolan.se
(100) http://www.studera.nu
adults who are not in employment, education or training is further discussed in the ReferNet thematic article on Guidance and outreach for inactive and unemployed (101).

5. References


Skolverket (2018a) Uppföljning av språkintroduktion.


