



JYVÄSKYLÄN YLIOPISTO
UNIVERSITY OF JYVÄSKYLÄ

The changing role of general studies and Civic education in Nordic VET Curricula

Session: Trends and Responsiveness – Changes in VET delivery

Bonn, Friday 9th September, 9-11

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Aim

- Main insights from the work on the role of general studies and civic education in VET in the Nordic countries
- personal thoughts and insights
- ideas/recommendations for future research as well as reflections on the first results of the Cedefop project



Post office, Seinäjoki, Finland in the 1960s

From the crossroads of
Kauppakatu and
Valtionkatu and
Picture: 106,
Collection: Seinäjoen
maakuntakokoelma
<https://www.porstuakirjastot.fi/items/show/175>



Co-evolution of organizational arrangements and shift toward digital learning ecosystems



Time	Industrial revolutions	Organisational relations and means of communication, storage of information
Turn of the 21st century	3rd industrial revolution: Consumerism, ICT development, popularized computers, microchips	Learning organizations and Networks between organizations: Shift away from printed material toward portable devices, internet and webpages for sharing information
Early 21st century	Industry 4.0: Machine learning, Artificial intelligence, cloud services	Business and innovation ecosystems, Digital learning ecosystems, ecologies of learning: Cloud storage, video-conferencing: enhanced communication accross distance

Finnish VET, Enhanced:

- Competence based approach
- Individualised, personal study programmes
- Work-based learning
- Flexibility

Table adopted from the Report to Cedefop Future of VET- project (WP3 country report by Virolainen, M.)

Table 1. Initial VET programmes' curricula changes between 1990s and 2021(!)

Characteristics of initial VET qualifications	Time period		
	1990s	2000s	2010-2021
Length of studies	2-3 years 80-120 study weeks	3 years 120 study credits	Flexible study time, personal development plan 180 competence points
Study components measured as	Study weeks (<i>opintoviikko</i>)	Study credits (<i>opintopiste</i>)	Competence points (<i>osaamispiste</i>)
General studies	Common studies (Kaikille yhteiset opinnot) 20 study weeks -studies in mathematics and natural sciences -studies in humanities and societal issues -ethical studies and cultures. Due to free choice, it is possible to study common studies up to 40 study weeks.		Common qualification components (Yhteiset tutkinnon osat) 35 competence points -competencies in communication and interaction -competencies in mathematics and natural sciences, -competencies in societal and working life participation -free choice studies
Learning environments	School and workshop (Apprenticeship as a separate route)	School, workshop and workplace learning	School, workshop and workplace learning, digital (distant) learning
Work-based learning	<i>Practical training (harjoittelu)</i> Training is part of vocational studies Length varies between qualifications: Electricians- minimum 4 study weeks, Practical nurses complete practice related studies in authentic work situations 25 study weeks in the minimum	<i>On the job learning (since 1999):</i> 20 study weeks in the minimum (<i>työssäoppiminen</i>)	<i>Training agreement or apprenticeship</i> (<i>koulutussopimus or oppisopimus</i>) In principle up to 145 competence points depending on students' personal study plan and chosen work environment.
Assessment	Teacher. Typically at school. Generic assessment regulation: assessment based on the goals defined for each study units.	Teacher, student and employer (IVET). Skills demonstrations. Shift toward different assessment criteria defined for each study unit and each qualification specifically.	Teacher and employer. Preferably at workplace. Competence demonstrations. Specified and different assessment criteria for each study unit and each qualification



Five periods of transformation, changing legislation and regulations

- 1) practical training and school-based VET until 1999 (Stenström & Virolainen, 2018b)
- 2) on-the-job-training and developing vocational skills demonstrations for IVET 2000–2005 (Haltia, 2006; Poikela & Rökköläinen, 2006),
- 3) enhanced work-based learning until 2015 (Hievanen et al. 2015),
4) maturing competence based approach since 2018 and new combined legislation for IVET and CVET (Rintala & Nokelainen, 2020) and
- 5) prolonged compulsory education until age of 18 since the autumn 2021.



General studies and Finnish VET

- Development toward more detailed qualification requirements started in the beginning of 2000s, when skills demonstrations were adopted as part of IVET (Haltia, 2006; Isopahkala-Bouret, 2013).
- The amount of general subjects provided in VET did not change very dramatically 1995- 2015 but their relative amount within a qualification decreased (Nylund & Virolainen, 2019). This could be compensated by the fact that qualifications and studies for IVET became longer (three years) since 1990s; they enabled more individual choice, based on individual preference or due to field-specific or local requirements.
- Further, students could choose additional studies to strengthen their general competences.

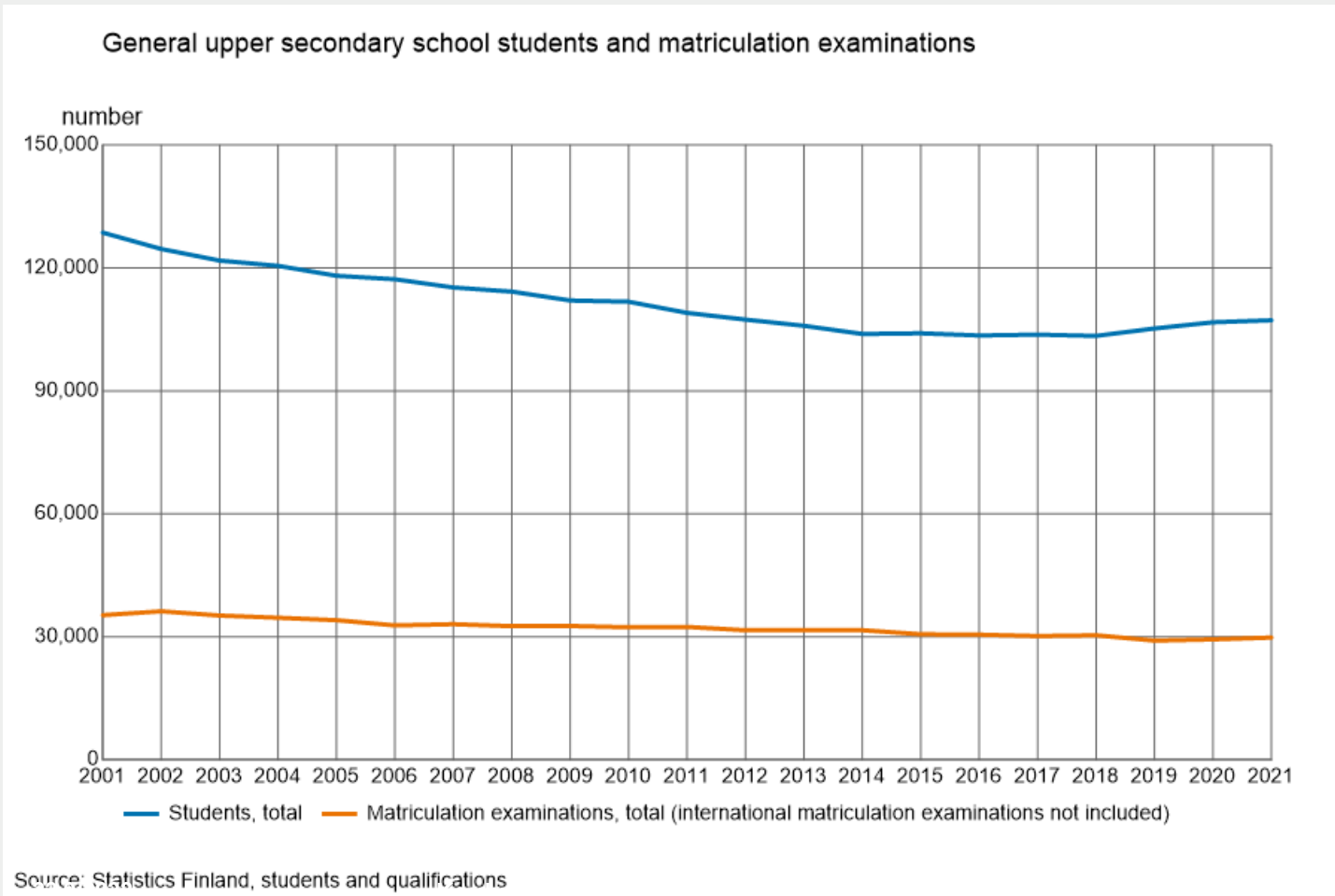
Remarks about transformation of general studies



- **The tension between demands** in the labour market and transformation into Digital Taylorism (teethed by surveillance capitalism, see Zuboff, 2019) giving increased emphasis to individualized adaptation and increased self-efficacy, self-management, self-compassion and self-surveillance skills **and** socializing young, developing inclusive upper secondary education **remains**
- Have a **decisive role in transitions** to higher education, skills in subjects such as maths and languages are important, for students to succeed in HE (universities of applied sciences); research on student experience about the relations of VET qualification, employment and HE needed
- **Transversal skills**, soft skills are crucial for citizenship and employability 21st century (educational scientists)
- **Micro-credentials** are targeted to demands for employability, but where shortages of general skills are met (globalization, immigration, citizenship)?
- The importance of professional, vocational language and communication skills has hardly decreased (Hellne-Halvorsen, Lahne & Nore 2022; Paul, 2017)

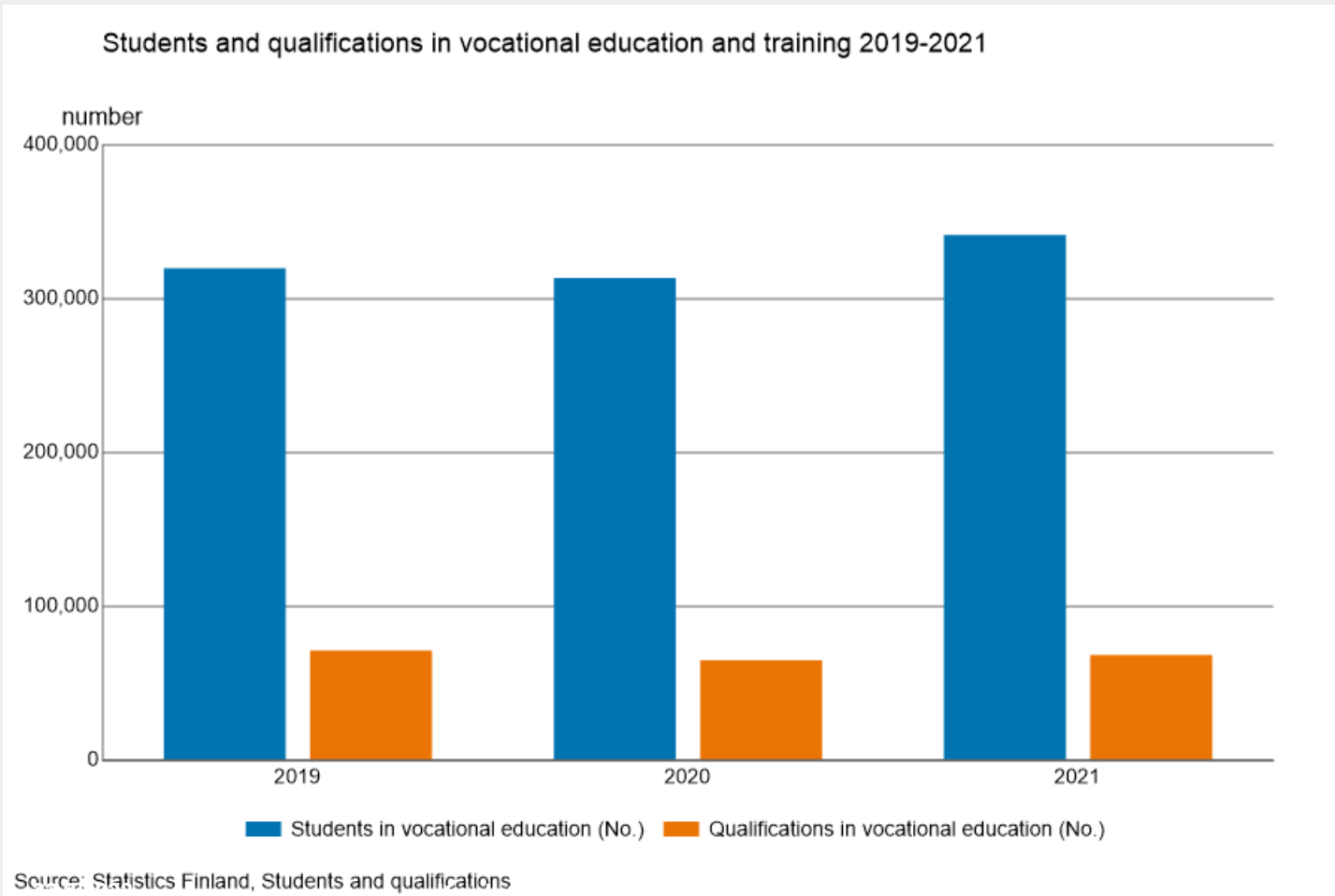


Trends: after compulsory ed. -18





Trends, continued





Future research ?

- The representation of sustainability, general studies, transversal skills and civic education issues in VET qualifications and curricula;
- Approaches to adapting and adopting skills related to the latest technologies, digitalization and manufacturing 4.0 (5.0) into VET
- Processes and models of VET curricula reforms in European countries
- Trends in transition patterns accross countries (long-term follow up)



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