

Abstract

Measuring the quality of vocational education and training: A Norwegian pilot of the COMET assessment instrument.

Leif Chr. Lahn

Department of education, University of Oslo.

Background and aim. On the international arena several actions have been taken to establish quality indicators of vocational education and training (VET). However, the diversity of these educational systems has complicated such efforts which consequently tend to concentrate on purely formal characteristics. When focusing on the assessment of vocational education and training at the level of learning outcomes and teaching one must ask if it is feasible to develop an assessment system of learning and training quality that is valid across the different vocations?. In this paper we address this question by discussing the results from a Norwegian pilot (“Measuring competence development in VET”, MECVET, funded by Research Council Norway) of an instrument aiming at the assessment of students’ / apprentices’ vocational competences during their training.

Methodology. MECVET piloted a German model and assessment instrument COMET developed by researchers at the University of Bremen. In order to strengthen the professional validity of the test, the assignments were formulated as “authentic” core tasks from three vocations; health care workers, electricians and industrial mechanics. German case templates were translated but validated and adjusted to Norwegian contexts in expert workshops (trade, school and research). The test and a survey on the learning environment in school and work place were administered to students and apprentices over along their three years track from school into two years of apprenticeship.

Findings. Compared with international results the Norwegian test scores in vocational competence had a more distinct growth curve and correlated clearly with reported support from the work places’ learning environments. The differences between the three vocations were larger than expected, and our findings question the validity of a general assessment instrument across vocational domains.