
CEDEFOP OPINION SURVEY
ON VOCATIONAL EDUCATION
AND TRAINING IN EUROPE

DENMARK



Please cite this publication as:

Andersen, O. D. and Kruse, K. (2018). *Cedefop opinion survey on vocational education and training in Europe: Denmark*. Cedefop ReferNet thematic perspectives series.

http://libserver.cedefop.europa.eu/vetelib/2018/opinion_survey_VET_Denmark_Cedefop_ReferNet.pdf

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Reviewed by Cedefop

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This thematic perspective was prepared based on data collected through the first Cedefop European public opinion survey on VET. The European report can be found at:

http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/files/5562_en.pdf

More information on the survey at: <http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/events-and-projects/projects/opinion-survey-vocational-education-and-training-europe>

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Introduction

The focus in this article is how the Danish VET system is perceived and evaluated.

A major European survey has mapped how VET systems in the European member states are experienced and evaluated by their respective citizens. The survey asked over fifty questions and has 35 646 respondents, 1 010 in Denmark. The focus in the survey is on four main issues:

- (a) awareness and knowledge;
- (b) attractiveness and access;
- (c) experience and satisfaction;
- (d) outcome and effectiveness.

This article is therefore structured in accordance with these four main issues, being based and built upon a large amount of statistical data provided by CEDEFOP. However, by means of introduction, we will provide a brief presentation of the Danish VET system together with some key historical perspectives in order to provide a proper framework within which to interpret the survey as it relates to Denmark, as well as presenting the challenges it has uncovered.

The Danish VET system in brief

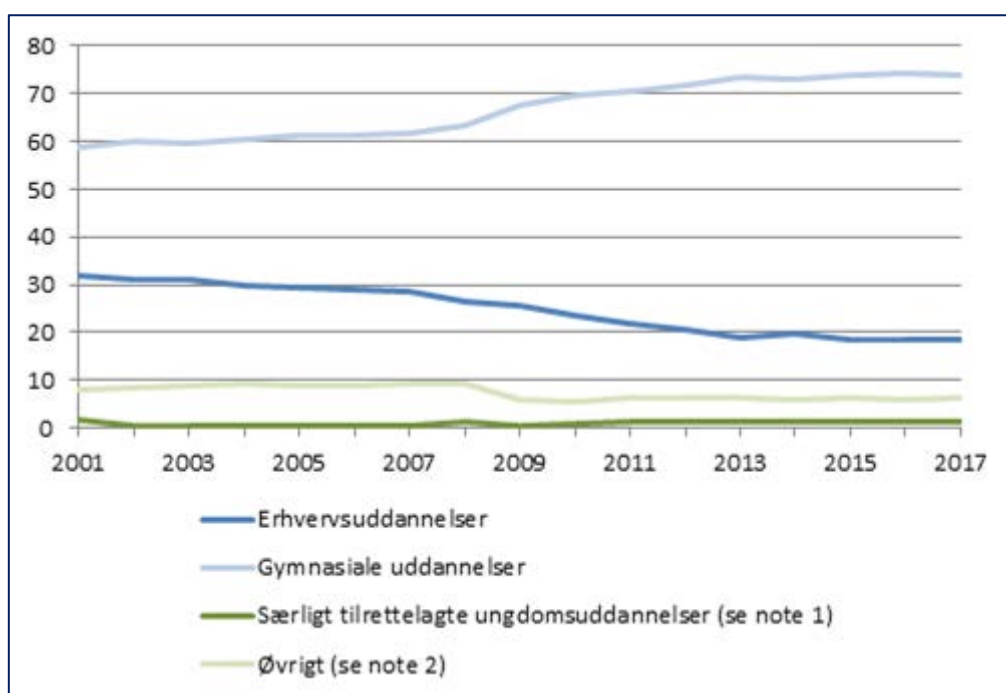
The Danish apprenticeship system has deep historical roots in the institutional structures that characterize the Danish labour market. Vocational Education and Training (VET) falls under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Education. The VET system is characterized by tri-partite governance, which is central to ensuring the relevance and quality of VET provision in a dynamic economy such as Denmark's. The main relevant Act stresses that the VET system is a youth education system.

The system is built upon a core foundation of trust between the social partners and the Ministry of Education. Historically the system has developed from being based upon traditional learning from a master to being a modern dual system with the aim of bridging the gap between school-based learning and work-based learning in a company. A number of quality assurance tools are embedded in the basic framework, which ensures the system's versatile and developmental nature. In 1999, the Danish VET system was awarded the

Bertelsmann Prize as the world's most innovative VET system (Business DK, February 2013) ⁽¹⁾.

However, since 2000 the number of students who have chosen a VET programme directly from compulsory school has been declining. The clear objective of the 2015 VET reform is therefore to reach a figure of 30% of the youth cohort applying for VET.

Figure 1. Applications for youth education from students directly from compulsory school (9th and 10th grade) in 2001-2017.



Note 1: Erhvervsuddannelser – Vocational Education and Training (VET)

Note 2: Gymnasiale Uddannelser – General Upper Secondary Education

Note 3: Includes EGU basic VET programmes and specially designed programmes for young people with special needs

Note 4: Production schools and other

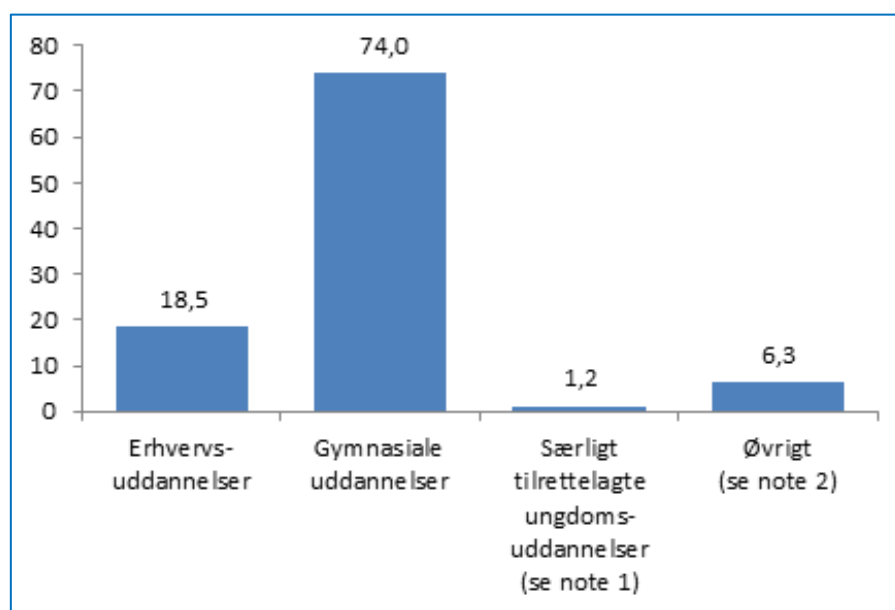
Source: Danish Ministry of Education – National Agency for IT and Learning based on www.optagelse.dk.

The Council of the Labour Movement has pointed out that there will be a shortage of skilled labour with VET qualifications in Denmark by 2020. Based on this analysis, the Confederation of Danish Industry (*Dansk Industri* or DI) has calculated that since 2014 VET institutions have already been obliged to educate and train 41% more apprentices in trade and 127% more apprentices in industry in order to meet the needs of the labour market. There is already a shortage of

⁽¹⁾ <http://www.business.dk/diverse/tyesk-mediegigant-valgte-danske-uddannelser-som-nr.-1>

skilled labour in trade in the Capital Region and a shortage of industrial technicians and metalworkers especially in the North Denmark Region. One reason for this is that about 20% to 25% of skilled workers in industry are above the age of 55 and are expected to retire within five to eight years. Despite the good intentions and strong focus on how to attract more students to VET, the number of applicants coming direct from compulsory school is not rising, and the tendency to choose general upper secondary school instead continues to dominate the picture. This is also reflected in the application patterns for 2017.

Figure 2. Number of applications to youth education directly from compulsory school (9th and 10th grade) in 2017 (per cent)



Note 1: Includes EGU basic VET programmes and specially designed programmes for young people with special needs and new combined post-compulsory education;

Note 2: Includes production schools, folk high schools, single subject courses, travel abroad, unskilled labour and others;

Note 3: *Erhvervsuddannelser* : vocational education and training (VET);

Note 4: *Gymnasiale Uddannelser*: general upper secondary education.

Source: Danish Ministry of Education - National Agency for IT and Learning , based on www.optagelse.dk.

These facts have in many ways put their mark on Danish debates on educational policy and have first of all stimulated many voices to express concerns about Denmark's ability to provide the necessary number of skilled workers.

The debate about VET is therefore high on the political agenda, and the latest reform of the Danish VET system (Improving vocational education and

training, implemented in August 2015) therefore focused on the attractiveness of VET ⁽²⁾ by setting out four clear objectives:

Objective 1

More students must choose to start a VET immediately following compulsory school from grade 9 or grade 10

Result target 1.1. At least 25% must choose a VET immediately following grade 9 or 10. This share must increase to at least 30% by 2025.

Objective 2

More people must complete a VET

Result target 2.1. The completion rate must be improved from 52% in 2012 to at least 60% by 2020 and at least 67% by 2025.

Objective 3

VET must challenge all students so they may reach their fullest potential

Result target 3.1. The share of the most gifted students – measured as the share of students who complete a total number of subjects at a level that exceeds the compulsory minimum level set by the trade committees – must increase year by year. A baseline will be established using the school year of 2013/14 as a benchmark.

Result target 3.2. The high employment rate for newly graduated students must be maintained.

Objective 4

Trust and well-being in the VET must be strengthened

Result target 4.1. The well-being of the students and the satisfaction of those businesses that hire the students must be gradually increased by 2020. The objectives provide a clear framework and direction for vocational institutions during the coming years.

The objectives will provide a well-defined basis for follow up in order that both the government and the individual vocational institutions may be measured based on the results achieved.

Nevertheless, it should be noted that a number of recent social developments might make these objectives very difficult to fulfil present challenges to the VET system in Denmark. First, the youth generations that are currently emerging mostly prefer to go to general upper secondary school so they can postpone their choice of a future career, which choosing a VET would not permit them. In a knowledge society like Denmark's, this may not be surprising, but nonetheless it will make the political objectives of VET difficult to achieve in practice.

⁽²⁾ <file:///C:/Users/odan/Downloads/140224-endelig-aftaletekst-25-2-2014.pdf>

Secondly, research has shown that knowledge of the vocational education system among those who are responsible for guiding young people after compulsory school (the Youth Guidance Centers UU) is relatively limited, which may lead to students being guided 'automatically' towards general upper secondary education. Thirdly, the VET sector has a weak image with the public because of problems with the lack of internships, high dropout rates and poor standards of well-being among students.

Two years after the reform was implemented, Objective 1 has already become an issue in the negotiations over the 2018 Finance Act, with the intention of lowering the objectives concerning the number of students choosing VET directly from compulsory school. Parallel to this, there has been a general reduction in financial contributions in the entire public sector, including VET, for which an annual reduction of 2% of the public grant has been imposed.

Thus, the VET system is currently a controversial issue in debates over Danish education policy. Many have high ambitions for the system, but the history that has characterized it over the past fifty years shows that it is difficult to change the larger issues of the lack of attractiveness, the high dropout rates and the lack of internships.

More recently, the Danish government has launched two initiatives to improve the VET system. It plans to implement a reform of the system that prepares young people for VET, and a new tripartite agreement from October 2017 will provide an extra 150 million DKR (20 million euros) to boost quality in VET.

It is therefore of great interest to have an opportunity to decode and evaluate this survey of a relatively large number of respondents to draw a picture of how the system is perceived and assessed in the public's consciousness in Denmark.

Let us look at what the survey can tell us about this.

CHAPTER 1.

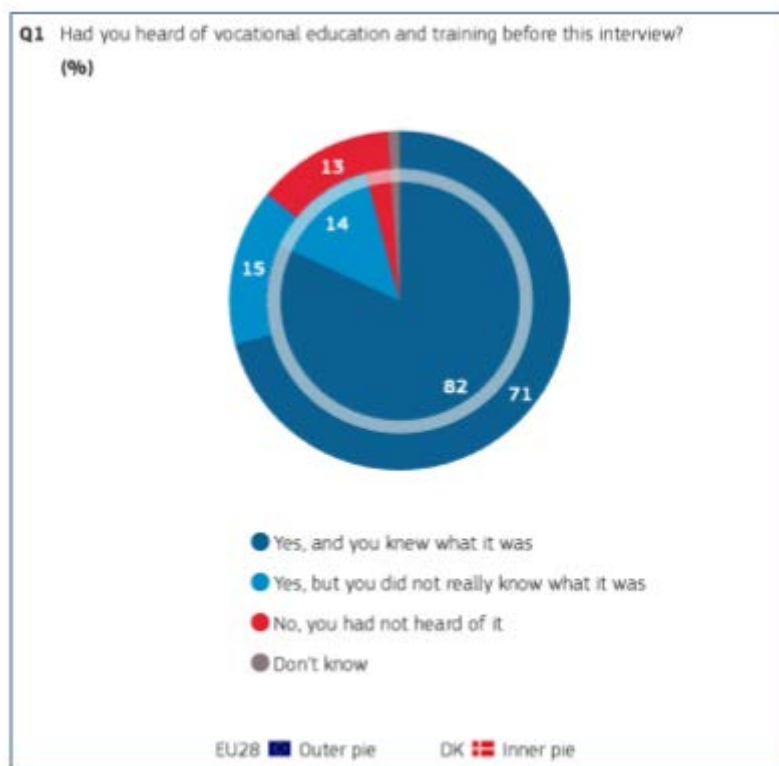
Awareness and knowledge of VET

Overall the survey indicates that general knowledge and awareness of vocational education and training is high in Denmark. People feel that they are well informed about the existence of the VET system.

The first question in the survey asks: 'Had you heard of vocational education and training before this interview?' Only a minority of 2-3% answered 'no' to this question, while a large majority of 82% answered 'yes'. 14% answered that they had heard of the system, but did not know what it was.

Comparing these figures to the EU28 average, it is clear that awareness and knowledge among Danish citizens is higher than the EU average of 71% knowing about the VET system.

Figure 3. Awareness on vocational education and training



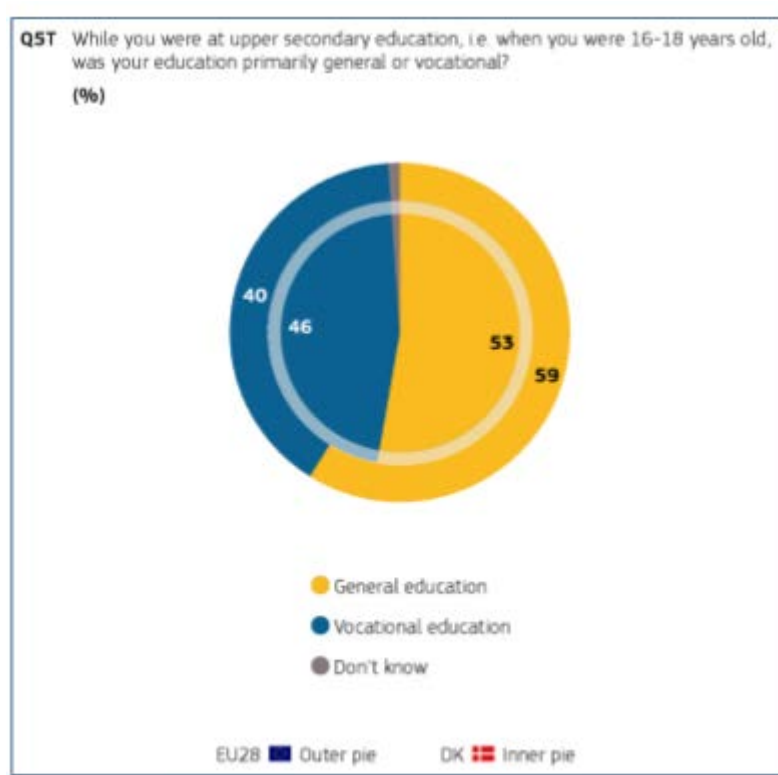
Source: Cedefop opinion survey on vocational education and training

The figures show that the high place given to VET on the political agenda in Denmark is probably reflected here. However, there may be other reasons behind this.

Guidance in general, and especially guidance regarding VET, has been prioritized in recent years due to the political focus on guiding more young people in the direction of choosing a VET education instead of a general upper secondary education. There is reason to presume that, in the EU context, the high degree of awareness is a reflection of that.

The answers to the next question in the survey are more surprising.

Figure 4: Participation in vocational education and training



Source: Cedefop opinion survey on vocational education and training

In the survey, 46% of the Danish respondents replied that their youth education primarily had a vocational character, compared to an EU average of 40%. This does not mean that only 18% of a youth cohort chose VET directly from compulsory school. Part of the explanation may be that for some of the respondents their time in education lies back in the years when the proportion of vocational education was higher, but it can hardly be the whole explanation. First, one can imagine that, in addition to respondents who directly referred to basic vocational education, others in their answers were referring to upper general

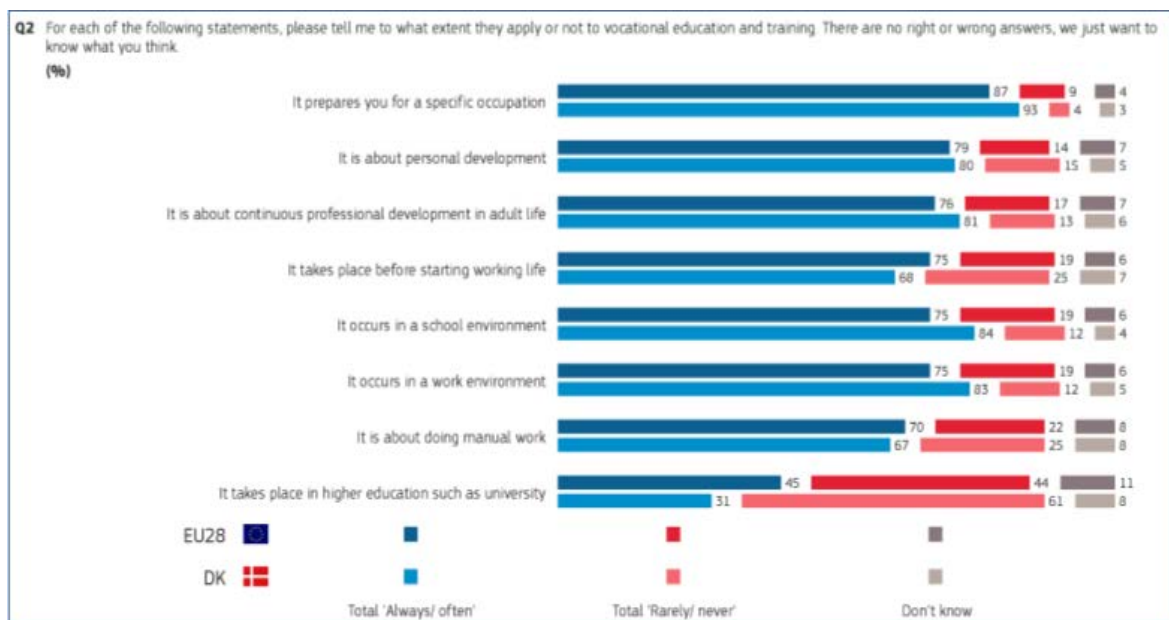
technical education programmes. According to Statistics Denmark (*Danmarks statistik*), the highest education among the 30-69-year-olds is most often a vocational education. By 2016, 37% had had a vocational education, while 34% had gone through higher education. In 2006, 39% of the 30-69 year-olds had had a vocational education, while 28% had gone through higher education. The proportion of 30-69-year-olds with higher education as their highest level of education increased during the past ten years, while there was a slight decline in the proportion of people with a vocational education. Among the remaining 29% of the 30-69-year-olds in the population, 20% had had compulsory school education and 5% upper secondary education as the highest education, while for the last 5% there was no explanation.

Note: <http://www.dst.dk/Site/Dst/Udgivelser/GetPubFile.aspx?id=22259&sid=uddan>

It is more likely that the respondents had the experience and feeling of being part of a vocational programme in spite of their education more likely being characterized as ‘general education’. If that is not the case, then it is difficult to explain the answers to this question.

In many of the questions surrounding the topic of how ‘vocational education’ is perceived, there are no large differences between the Danish respondents and the general picture in Europe.

Figure 5: Factors associated with VET



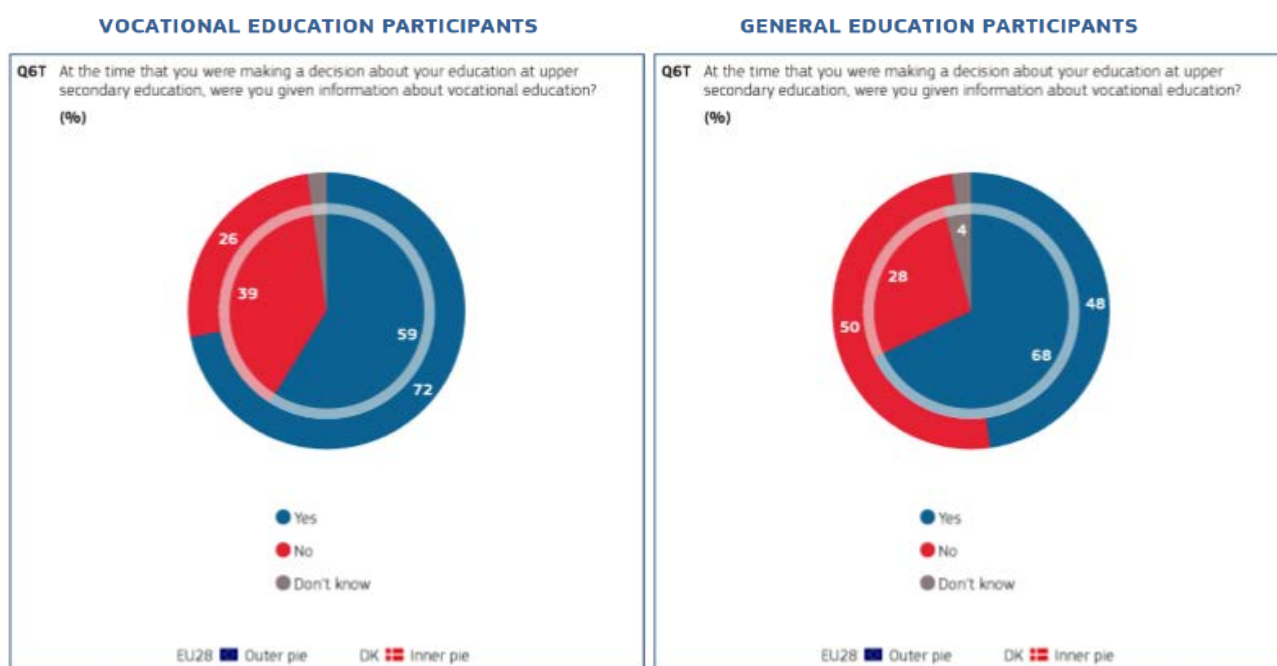
Source: Cedefop opinion survey on vocational education and training

Where the differences are most pronounced is the question of where vocational education is located. Where 45% at the EU level attend vocational education at higher education institutions, the figure for Denmark is only 31%. In other words, there is a clear awareness in Denmark that vocational education has its own system, with 61% rejecting its location in a higher education institution.

Similarly, there is a difference in the perception of when vocational education takes place: whereas 75% at the EU level corresponds to "before work", the figure in Denmark is 68%. The most obvious explanation for this difference is probably the fact that Danish vocational education is a dual system and that VET students will experience education and work experiences being closely integrated with one another.

Other interesting answers can be observed when looking at the question of whether the individual has been informed about the possibility of vocational education when deciding on the choice of youth education:

Figure 6. Provision of information on vocational education and training by educational orientation of upper secondary



Source: Cedefop opinion survey on vocational education and training

There is a significantly higher proportion of participants in vocational education (39%), which is a negative result compared to the EU average of 26%.

On the other hand, with respect to participants in general youth education, 28% of Danish respondents responded to this, against an EU average of 50%.

How should we interpret these numbers? At the same time, it is not logical for a higher proportion of people who choose to orient themselves to vocational education not to indicate that they have been informed about it compared to those who have chosen to orient themselves towards general education. The figures can thus indicate that there is a problem with guidance and information in Denmark.

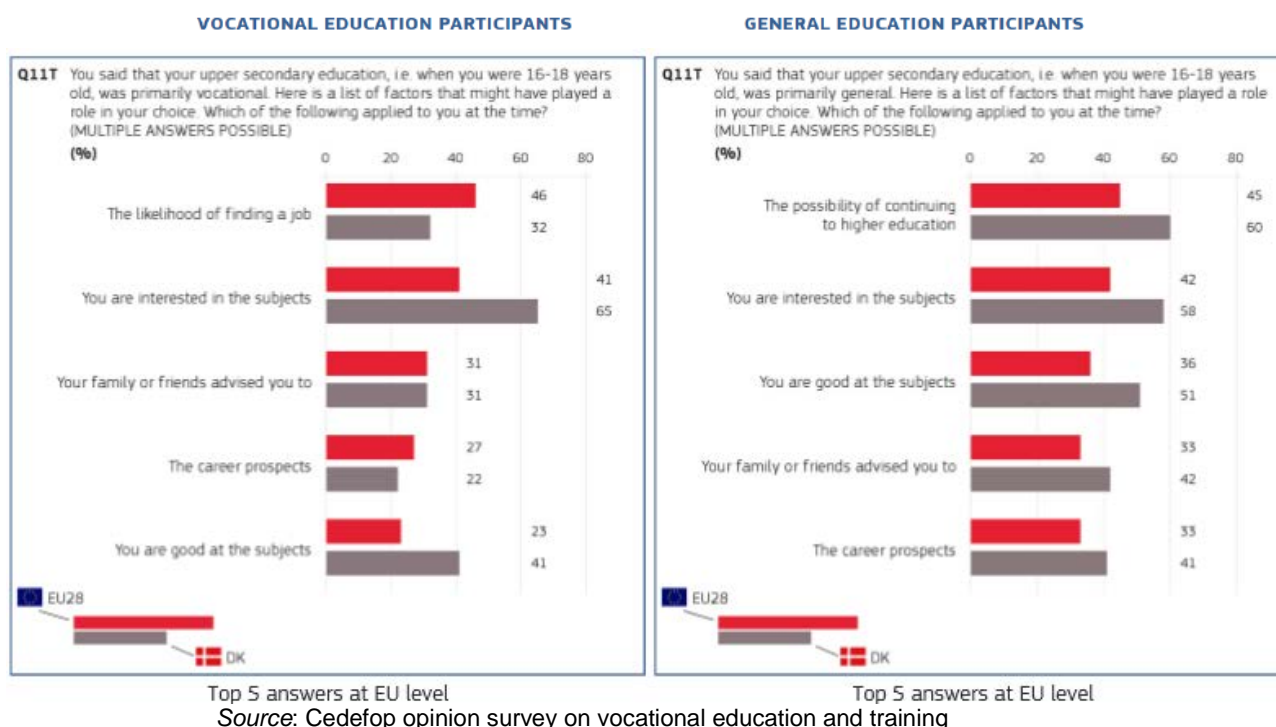
The fact that more (potential) vocational training participants are not informed about vocational training can only be construed as meaning that many decide on vocational education without receiving any information or guidance about it, despite the fact that Denmark has invested a lot in providing the necessary information. In positive terms, decisions can be taken on the basis of 'other knowledge', such as family relationships, friends, the media etc., but the numbers should give us an opportunity for reflection on some of the significant dropout problems that characterize Danish vocational education. When almost four out of every ten participants in Danish vocational education programs indicate that they have not received information about the education they are participating in, we must conclude that they may be faced with conditions or challenges that they did not expect during their education and for that reason may risk dropping out.

The Youth Guidance Centres (UU Centres) are responsible for the collective guidance of 80% of pupils in compulsory education, which may be too focused on general upper secondary education. The last 20% are in the 'Special Guidance' category and are the recipients of individual guidance.

Here again, the level of guidance has been cut back significantly by the 2015 VET reform.

An important question about what factors have been involved in the choice of youth education is also affected by the study. Respondents have been asked to identify particular influences on their choices, and for participants in Danish vocational education, it is characteristic that the interest in content especially and the feeling of being good at managing content in the subject is crucial. A secondary role is the opportunity to find a job and a career perspective. However, at the same time, advice from family and friends plays a strong part in the decision, which can confirm the assumption that more official information and guidance prior to the education decision is of secondary importance to participants in vocational education. The same pattern is found with participants in general upper secondary education, but with the significant difference that the possibility of continuing on from there to higher education plays a decisive role:

Figure 7. Factors on choosing vocational education and training orientation



On the question of whether anyone has advised participants to commence vocational education, the answers fall out as follows:

Table 1: Advise against taking vocational education and training

Q 12T: At the time when you were aged 16-18 and you were deciding on your education at upper secondary, did anyone advise you against taking vocational education?	EU-28	Denmark
TOTAL	14 242	426
Yes, your friends	742 5%	8 v 2%
Yes, your family	2403 17%	39 v 9%
Yes, someone at school (teacher or career advisor)	1 199 8%	25 6%
Yes, someone from the world of work	199 1%	3 1%
Yes, someone else	199 1%	11 ^ 2%
Non - No	10 611 75%	371 ^ 87%
Don't Know	102 1%	2 1%
Total 'Oui' - Total 'Yes'	3 530 25%	53 v 12%

As already seen, the most significant difference between the EU average and Denmark is that Danish families are less likely to refuse vocational education than is the case in Europe, where the trend is almost twice as high.

The most obvious explanation for this is probably to be sought in the long tradition of vocational education in Denmark, compared with a number of other countries in Europe, where vocational education systems may, to a lesser extent, be established as a collective consciousness of history and in general have a shorter history behind them.

Summary of Section 1

The answers in this section of the survey show that general knowledge of the vocational education system is high in Denmark and that the inclination to use it is at a correspondingly high level. Conversely, it is characteristic that quite a lot of participants in vocational education seem to have no actual guidance or information on which to base their educational choices, but probably made the decision to apply for vocational training based on personal knowledge or recommendations. This last aspect is particularly surprising, though it can provide us with perspectives on how to focus guidance prospectively. To the extent that it can be shown that dropping out from vocational education is also linked to a lack of knowledge about the programs the individual can choose, this is an obvious field for research into vocational education in Denmark.

CHAPTER 2.

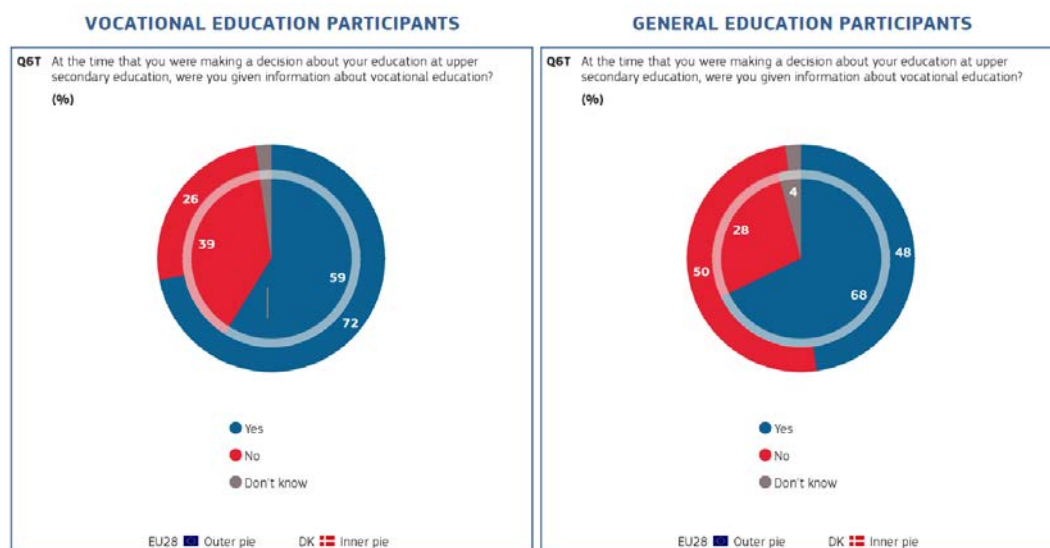
Attractiveness and access

As mentioned in the introduction to this article, the Danish VET system has faced a number of challenges, especially the issues of the lack of attractiveness and low numbers of applicants who choose VET directly from compulsory school, which have been given a particular focus.

Therefore this section of the survey, where the question of attractiveness is addressed, is of special interest from a Danish point of view.

First of all, it is striking that in a nation that is recognized internationally for its VET system, VET participants have a more negative picture of the VET system than the EU average:

Figure 8. Image of vocational education and training by educational orientation in upper secondary education

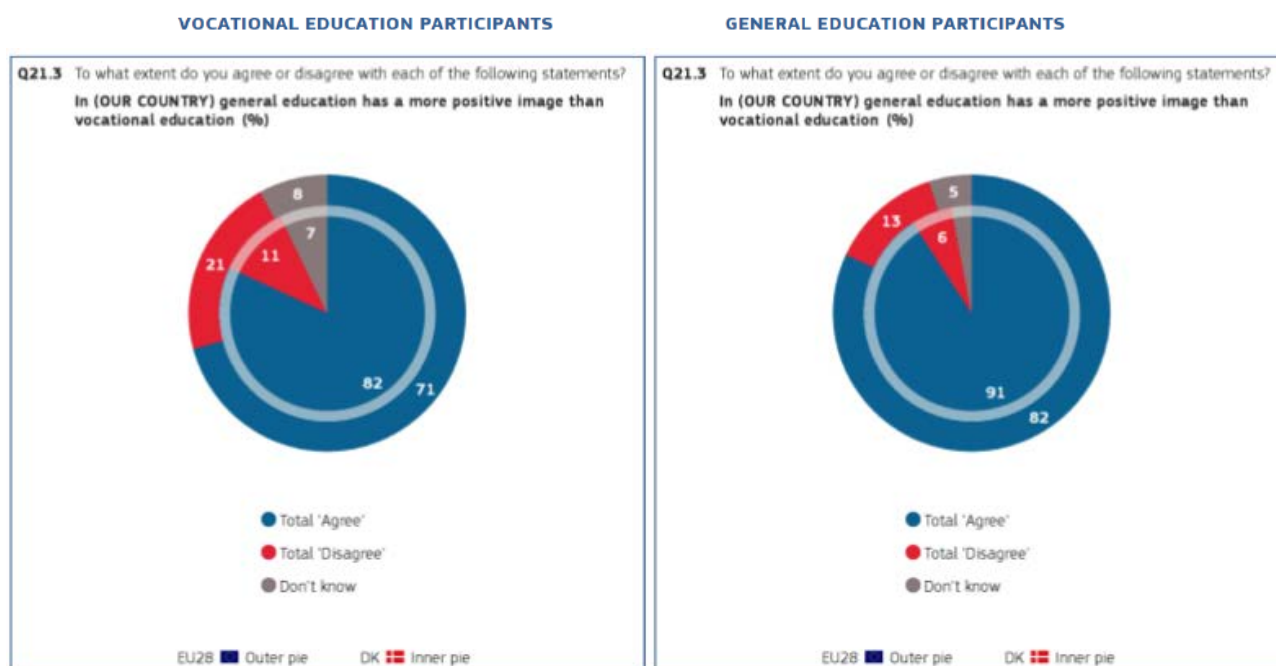


Source: Cedefop opinion survey on vocational education and training

The figure above (left) shows this clearly. The left part of the figure shows that 29% of respondents in VET found the image of VET negative, while the right part of the figure shows that this is true to a large extent for participants in non-vocational education as well. Almost 50% felt that the Danish VET system has a negative image.

This point of view is clearly confirmed when respondents are asked if non-vocational education has a more positive image than VET.

Figure 9. Vocational education vs. general education



Source: Cedefop opinion survey on vocational education and training

The two questions above seems to confirm that Danes have a relatively negative picture of VET as such, and this is indeed the case for those who choose the non-vocational track as youth education.

A number of questions in the survey focus more specifically, on how VET is estimated when it comes to certain important parameters such as vocational relevance, ability to find jobs quickly and the potential for finding well-paid and more highly respected jobs.

As regard to the first issue, vocational relevance, the answers show that, to a higher degree than the EU average, Danes feel that VET provides the skills needed on the labour market.

Table 2: Core benefits of vocational education and training: employers needs

Q18 1: People in vocational education learn skills that are needed by employers in (OUR COUNTRY)	EU28	DK
TOTAL	35 646	1 010
Totally agree	13 304 37%	450 ^ 45%
Tend to agree	17 400 49%	446 v 44%
Tend to disagree	2 732 8%	49 v 5%
Totally disagree	536 1%	11 1%
Don't know	1674 5%	54 5%
Total 'Agree'	30704 86%	896 ^ 89%
Total 'Disagree'	3268 9%	60 v 6%

Source: Cedefop opinion survey on vocational education and training

Looking at the question of whether VET provides a quick pathway to jobs, the picture is the same:

Table 3: Core benefits of vocational education and training: obtaining a job

Q 18. 4: Vocational education allows you to find a job quickly after obtaining a qualification or diploma	EU28	DK
TOTAL	35 646	1 010
Totally agree	7 191 20%	407 ^ 40%
Tend to agree	16716 47%	418 v 41%
Tend to disagree	6 964 20%	107 v 11%
Totally disagree	2 250 6%	16 v 2%
Don't know	2 524 7%	62 6%
Total 'Agree'	23 907 67%	825 ^ 81%
Total 'Disagree'	9 214 26%	123 v 13%

Source: Cedefop opinion survey on vocational education and training

The share of Danish respondents who agreed with the statement that VET provides quick access to jobs is twice as large as the EU average, parallel to the fact that the share of Danish respondents who disagreed with the same statement is almost half as large as the EU average.

Concerning the statement that 'VET leads to well-paid jobs' (Q18 3), there is on the contrary almost no difference in the answers between Denmark and the EU, as 65% of the Danish respondents agreed with this compared to 61% in the EU generally.

Finally, feedback on the statement 'VET is a highly respected education' (Q18 2) indicates to some degree a more significant difference between Denmark and the EU average. 68% of Danish respondents agreed with this compared to 60% in Europe generally.

If we consider the feedback on these four statements about the attractiveness of VET, the picture is quite clear. The Danish respondents are more likely to recognize the qualities of VET compared to the EU average.

Asked what should be the priorities in investments – in VET or in non-vocational education (Q17) – there are no marked differences between Denmark and the EU average. Nearly 50% in both groups answered 'VET' when VET participants are asked. The difference is more significant when asking participants in non-vocational education, where 19% preferred VET investments, compared to 28% in the EU generally.

More surprising are the answers to a question concerning the possibilities for access to higher education after VET. Here 33% of the Danish respondents disagreed with the statement that 'It is easy to pass to higher education after VET' (Q19 1), while this was only the case for 24% in the EU generally. The shares of respondents who agreed with this are almost the same (DK: 43%; EU: 49%).

The question addresses a well-known issue in Denmark, of VET often being seen as a 'dead-end' choice, an impression which has recently been tackled by introducing a combined track combining VET with upper secondary education. This new track, EUX, has so far been quite successful in terms of its attractiveness, and it is the only VET programme that has experienced a rise in applicants, including those coming directly from compulsory school.

Concerning the statement that 'VET provides opportunities to study and work abroad', it is possible to identify differences between the Danish respondents and the EU average, as 72% of the Danes but only 61% of the European respondents agreed or strongly agreed with it.

The picture of the attractiveness of the Danish VET system is completed by the question of how easy it is to change from vocational to non-vocational education. The answers show that Danish respondents are more likely to assess this as 'quite difficult', as 46% of the Danish respondents said, this compared to 35% on the EU level.

The overall picture of the attractiveness of the Danish VET system thus reveals a number of interesting and paradoxical issues. On the one hand, Danish respondents had quite a negative picture of VET compared to the EU as a whole. On the other hand, the survey shows that Danish respondents described the VET system's strong qualities as giving quick access to the labour market through well-paid and respected jobs.

Where the negative view of the VET system overall comes from therefore calls for extra consideration. Part of the answer might be found in the perception of VET as a locked and closed system, as two of the questions in this section show, but it is hardly the full answer. The issue about a lack of internships, high dropout rates and the image of it being on the lowest rung of the educational hierarchy undoubtedly contributes to the relatively negative public image of the Danish VET system.

Summary of Section 2

The feedback in this section reveals an interesting paradox. On the one hand, the Danish respondents expressed a certain scepticism of VET in a general sense. The overall picture seems to be a little more negative compared to the EU average, but on the other hand the Danish respondents focused on a number of very important parameters (quick access to jobs, well-paid and respected jobs) and thus saw VET in a more positive light than EU citizens more generally.

However, at the same time the survey in this section designates some weak points in the Danish VET system, such as the lack of bridge building to higher education and the tendency to 'lock' participants into the vocational track.

CHAPTER 3.

Experience and satisfaction

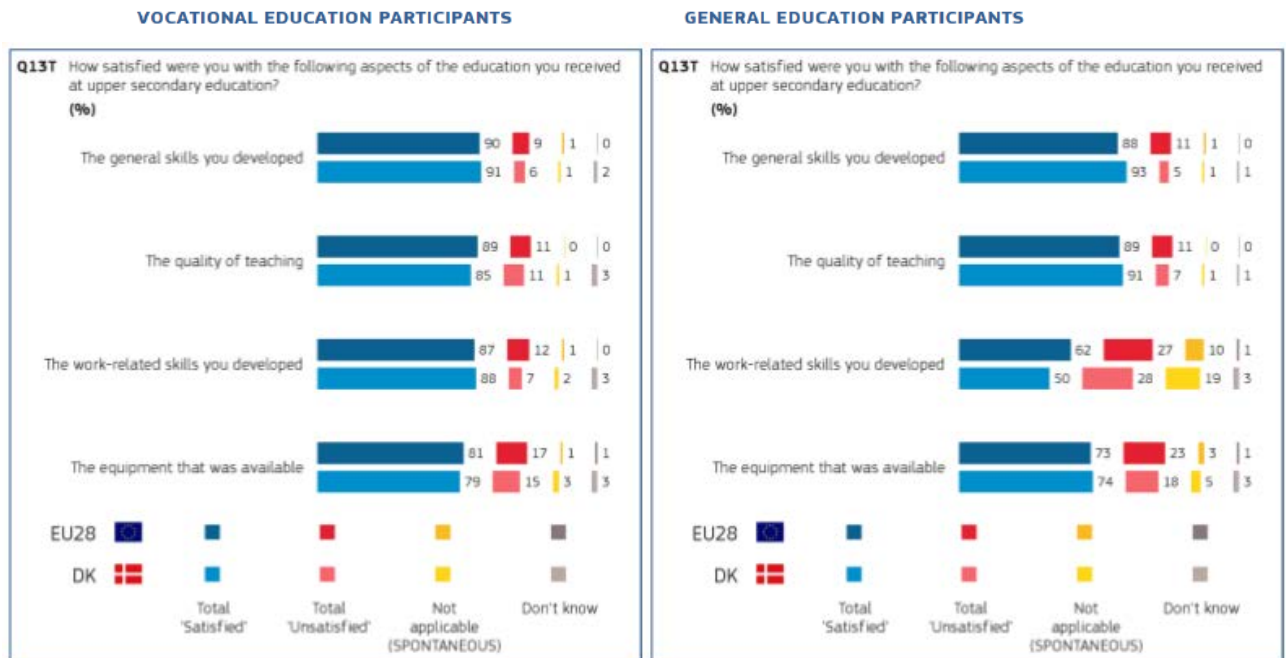
An important parameter in the views and assessment of VET in a given country is the actual experience of the skills obtained and the level of satisfaction among the participants when entering VET.

In this chapter, we will draw a picture of the nature of these experiences and how satisfied the Danish participants were with their education.

Concerning participants' satisfaction, the following figure shows that Denmark is normally placed above the EU average, but there are certain important exceptions.

The figure shows the satisfaction of respondents when it comes to a number of issues concerning VET, partly in Denmark, partly in the EU, as the answers are grouped into two categories for the satisfied (very satisfied/relatively satisfied, e.g. DK+) and the dissatisfied (very unsatisfied/relatively unsatisfied, e.g. DK-) respectively.

Figure 10. Satisfaction with upper secondary education by educational orientation



Source: Cedefop opinion survey on vocational education and training

The figures show that the Danish respondents are slightly (1-2%) above the EU-average on all parameters, except for 'work-related skills'. In the category

‘work-related skills’, the Danish respondents were significantly (9%) below the EU average.

This tendency is interesting and calls for an in-depth study of what these answers mean. Paradoxically the answers in Q5T above showed that to a great extent the Danish respondents had the experience that their youth education was ‘vocational’. When only two thirds find that they develop work-related skills, it is therefore not obvious.

Parallel to this, the survey mapped out the degree to which VET participants have the experience of having acquired specific skills in certain areas:

Table 4: Outcomes of vocational education and training

Q14: Think have developed:	Denmark (% of Yes)	Denmark (% of No)	EU-28 (% of Yes)	EU-28 (% of No)
Communication skills	78	18	66	22
Learning a foreign language	67	22	58	33
Mathematical skills	68	25	73	9
Science and technology skills	47	27	62	14
Digital and computer skills	33	44	43	34
The ability to pursue and organise own learning	75	20	76	22
Social and civic competences to engage in active democratic participation	57	33	60	35
The ability to be creative	60	30	67	31
Sense of initiative and entrepreneurship	44	48	53	14
Cultural awareness	40	42	54	41
The ability to think critically	80	15	78	16
The ability to work with others	86	5	78	16

Source: Cedefop opinion survey on vocational education and training

The answers draw an interesting picture of how VET participants see and assess their own skills development and identifies in particular a number of

issues where the Danish respondents are clearly in deficit compared to the EU average.

Most obviously, the categories 'Science and technology skills' and 'Cultural awareness', with respectively a 15 and 14% difference from the EU average, are the two areas with the biggest deviations.

However, 'Digital and computer skills' and 'Sense of initiative and entrepreneurship', with respectively 10 and 9% difference from the EU average, also stand out.

These answers will probably both surprise and disappoint policy-makers in Denmark, who in recent years have worked hard to strengthen the digital and entrepreneurial profile of VET, but the answers are nonetheless an important indication of the fact that there still is a long way to go before Denmark is on a par with its European neighbours.

Summary of Section 3

Overall, the data in this section show that the Danish respondents are liable to experience VET as an education that delivers skills that the participants are satisfied with to an above average extent. The exception is the issue 'Work-related skills', which shows the opposite, namely that participants are satisfied below the average here.

More specifically, it is clear that compared to the EU-average the Danish respondents are able to designate some areas of competence in which they have the experience of having competences below average. As shown, this is the case for technological and digital competences on the 'hard' side, and cultural awareness and innovation/entrepreneurship on the 'soft' side.

CHAPTER 4.

Outcomes and effectiveness

In a special section, the CEDEFOP survey illuminates the advantages that VET can provide to its participants and to society as a whole.

If we look at the social aspects first, respondents were asked to assess how far they agree with the statements that VET contributes to strengthening the economy, reducing unemployment and countering social exclusion:

Table 5: Role of vocational education and training

VET contributes to:	Denmark (% agree)	Denmark (%disagree)	EU-28 (% agree)	EU-28 (% disagree)
Strengthening the economy	94	3	89	10
Reducing unemployment	93	4	80	15
Tackling social exclusion	83	5	78	15

Source: Cedefop opinion survey on vocational education and training

The answers show a relatively clear difference between Denmark and the EU, as for all three parameters there is a clear tendency for the Danish respondents to recognize and express the positive influence of VET on society more clearly than EU citizens as a whole, and generally they disagree that this is the case to only a very limited degree.

When we ask to what degree VET participants have continued in further education after VET, the following picture emerges:

Table 6: Further education after upper secondary

Q24: After finishing upper secondary education, did you continue studying at a higher level of education?	EU28	Denmark
TOTAL	20 226	682
Yes, you are currently attending	1 239	46
	6%	6%
Yes, but you did not complete it	1 114	19 v
	5%	3%
Yes, and you obtained a diploma or qualification	9 411	442 ^
	47%	65%
No	8 351	156 v
	41%	23%
DK	112	19 ^
	1%	3%
Total 'Yes'	11 764	507 ^
	58%	74%

Source: Cedefop opinion survey on vocational education and training

The table shows that, in the case of Denmark, there is a greater inclination to continue after VET. 74% of the Danish respondents have done so, compared to 58% in the EU as a whole.

Summary of Section 4

The two aspects addressed here on the one hand provide an illustration of how public opinion in Denmark views the social significance of VET more highly than EU citizens as such, and on the other hand that, compared to the EU average, Danes are able to use VET as a stepping stone to further education.

CHAPTER 5.

Main conclusions and needs for further research

If we consider all sections in the survey from the same perspective, a number of significant features emerge.

The survey shows that the Danish respondents have a characteristic double view of VET. On the one hand, and very generally, there is a negative attitude towards VET. On the other hand, and more specifically, we find a positive attitude to VET as 'delivering the goods' in providing relevant vocational skills and quick access to well-paid and respected jobs.

On the majority of the parameters measured by the survey, the Danish respondents tended to evaluate the qualities of VET more highly than their EU fellow citizens. This is especially the case when it comes to the ability to solve social issues such as unemployment and social exclusion.

Conversely, however, the results also indicate that the respondents had identified some weaknesses in the Danish VET system. The opportunities to continue in further education are estimated to be relatively weak, and evaluation of the skills of the VET participants acquired in VET is lower than the EU average in some areas. This is the case to a high degree for the 'hard' areas of competence such as digital and technological skills, but also for some 'soft' areas such as cultural awareness and innovation.

As shown in this analysis of the answers in the survey, a number of issues have been uncovered that Danish VET research can address.

Let us briefly elaborate on the issues and research questions that appear most relevant.

Guidance to choose youth education

The survey designates a field for in-depth investigations or research. The answers show that VET participants in Denmark only have the experience of having received guidance in the process of choosing youth education to a limited degree. A deeper understanding of this phenomena and of whether a possible lack of guidance might possibly be a factor explaining the drop-out rates from VET seems to be an obvious field of research.

Public opinion of VET

Compared to the EU average, the public image of VET in Denmark is negative. This fact, drawn from the survey, may seem paradoxical in a country where the history of VET is long and proud and where there is a VET system capable of delivering the relevant competences.

This negative image might ultimately have a negative influence on who and how many students will choose VET, making it an important field of research to try and figure out the reasons behind this negative image and whether there are any social, geographical or gender factors informing it.

Work-related skills

One of the significant results of the survey is the surprising finding that the Danish respondents felt that VET provides few 'work-related skills'. In a dual system like the Danish one, which aims to connect school teaching and work-based learning, this is, of course, an answer calling for deeper understanding, and it may provide a source to improve knowledge of how the holistic profile of VET can be strengthened by providing more work-related skills to VET participants.

Lack of competences in science and digitalisation?

The results of the survey indicate that Danish VET participants are weaker than the EU average when it comes to digital and scientific skills. It is, of course, important to uncover this problem in detail in order to find possible solutions.

Lack of competences concerning cultural awareness?

There is a corresponding lack of competences – relatively speaking – in the field of cultural awareness. The category is broad and open to interpretation, but it may indicate that the Danish VET system has an unacknowledged problem. What does this answer mean? This is a clear issue for further research.

Lack of entrepreneurial competences?

In spite of the broad strategic effort to develop entrepreneurial competences in Danish VET in recent years, this seems to be without clear effect looking at the results of the survey. This result is surprising and calls for deeper knowledge.

Locking in and the weak transition to further education

The answers in the survey confirm a well-known issue in Danish VET research. Participants experience difficulties in changing track in youth education (e.g. from

VET to general upper secondary education) and feel that the transition to further education after VET is difficult.

The introduction of the hybrid programme EUX, which combines VET and general upper secondary education, represents an attempt to tackle this. We should obviously seek to find out if this initiative can contribute to reducing these experiences of the limitations in the Danish VET system.

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