



A holistic student-centred guidance framework supports Finnish vocational education and training students in building competence identity

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Abstract

This study deals with competence-based and student-centered Finnish initial vocational education and training (IVET). The main research question is how holistic guidance supports the building of the student's competence identity in Finnish IVET. The holistic guidance in competence- and work-based vocational education and training is formally implemented when a personal competence development plan (PCDP) is drawn up for each student and informally in various interaction situations in studies, work, and leisure time. The guidance actors supported student's personal growth, guided learning and provided career guidance. For this study, interviews were carried out with IVET students (n=15) and IVET teachers (n=29). The analysis carried out combined data-based and abductive qualitative content analysis methods. In the analysis results, the different guidance actors were organised into the following five levels of guidance: 1) IVET teachers, tutors, and workplace instructors, 2) IVET study counsellors and special needs teachers, 3) student welfare personnel, 4) leisure time actors and hobby instructors, and 5) employment specialists. Based on the results, a framework was designed for holistic student-centred guidance in Finnish IVET. This framework describes how active student agency and multidisciplinary guidance work can support the building and updating of the student's competence identity. This study revealed that guidance processes are complex and highlights that many actors are, not only guidance specialists, needed to fulfil the task.

Keywords: holistic guidance, initial vocational qualifications, competence identity, guidance framework, student-oriented guidance



Introduction

Common objectives and principles for lifelong guidance have been drawn up for the member states of the European Union. In these, the objective of career and study guidance in vocational education and training (VET) is defined as supporting students in making meaningful and successful choices, decisions and solutions in their careers and educational choices (European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network, 2016, p. 34; see also Vuorinen, 2017). However, the current concepts of guidance emphasise the students' active role as a person building their own lives. Guidance can thus be defined as a comprehensive state of self-knowledge and agency development and life planning (Kettunen et al. 2020; McLeod, 2013; Vehviläinen, 2014) rather than as a process that supports successful education and career choices. The present discussion highlights that guidance should also concentrate on learning in the actual guidance processes (see e.g., Bergmo-Prvulovic, 2022; Thomsen, 2014), to support individuals' career competences and their wellbeing.

Student guidance can be defined as work that crosses disciplinary boundaries and has at its core the strengthening of the client's agency in a way that increases their overall wellbeing (Onnismaa, 2007; Vehviläinen, 2014, p. 24). Multi-disciplinary guidance is viewed as a network of student service arrangements both within and between organisations (Helander et al., 2020, p. 5; Korhonen & Nieminen, 2010). In workplace- and customer-oriented VET in Finland (Räisänen & Goman, 2018, p. 9), student guidance is multidisciplinary cooperation that considers all the areas of life in which the person operates, as profession and work are only one part of a person's life career (Korhonen & Nieminen, 2010; Vanhalakka-Ruoho, 2015, pp. 39–54).

VET provides a framework for multidisciplinary and holistic guidance that encompasses the whole of life, as the student's guidance process often involves many different actors, including study counsellors and teachers at educational institutions, instructors for work-based learning, and the student's family and friends (cf. European Commission, 2020, p. 31; Korhonen & Nieminen, 2010; Musset & Kurekova, 2018). It is essential to consider how different actors can contribute to supporting the student's agency in relation to their different guidance needs. The roles adopted by professionals are often predefined as very set and working across boundaries of expertise is not always easy (Akkerman & Bruining, 2016; Bergmo-Prvulovic, 2015, pp. 3–8; Isoherranen, 2012, pp. 110–112).

The actors involved in student's guidance may have very different guidance goals (cf. Magee et al., 2022, pp. 273–274) at either the conscious or unconscious level. In the transition that has taken place in career guidance from sharing information to the communal exploration of guidance-related questions, the role of guidance professionals is no longer the role of a content expert, but rather of an expert in processes and communal spaces (Kettunen, 2017, pp. 18–20; see also

Bakke et al., 2018, p. 52; Dey & Cruzvergara, 2014, pp. 13–15). Guidance services should be clear, multi-channel and individualised so that all parties involved are aware of how guidance and support services are implemented and who is implementing them (Karusaari, 2020, p. 150).

Vocational education and training in Finland includes initial, further, and specialist qualifications and also preparatory training. Finnish initial vocational education and training's (IVET) main purpose is to prepare people with competences in order to entry into the world of work or, for adults, specific occupations. The Finnish vocational education supports continuous learning, offering methods to improve skills for life, work, and further studies. In the Finnish VET, personalisation processes play an important role in holistic guidance. The process starts with a guidance session, where the qualifications competence objectives, student's life situation and future goals are discussed to find the best ways to achieve the student's goals and support learning. As part of personalisation, a personal competence development plan (PCDP) is drawn up which includes the planning of the competence to be acquired, and the guidance and support measures required by the student (Finlex Data Bank, 2017).

The impetus to conduct this study came from the changes that have taken place in VET (see Cedefop 2019a, pp. 23–25, 2019b, pp. 10–11; European Union, 2020), changes through which guidance has been and continues to be undergoing a transformation.

The aim of this study is to describe how the implementation of holistic guidance in Finnish IVET supports building the student's competence identity.

A holistic model for student-oriented guidance

Watts and Van Esbroeck (1998) have created a holistic student-centred guidance model which takes account of both the different levels of guidance and different guidance roles (Watts & Van Esbroeck, 2000). Using this holistic guidance model, it is possible to form an overall understanding of the actors and their areas of responsibility as well as the content areas of the guidance. In Finland, the model has been used a lot and it has been applied and modified to reflect the Finnish education system and the world of living. In the model (Figure 1), guidance actors' range of tasks and guidance content areas are related to the student's holistic guidance needs (Herranen & Penttinen, 2008, p. 10; Koskela & Rantanen, 2020, p. 121).

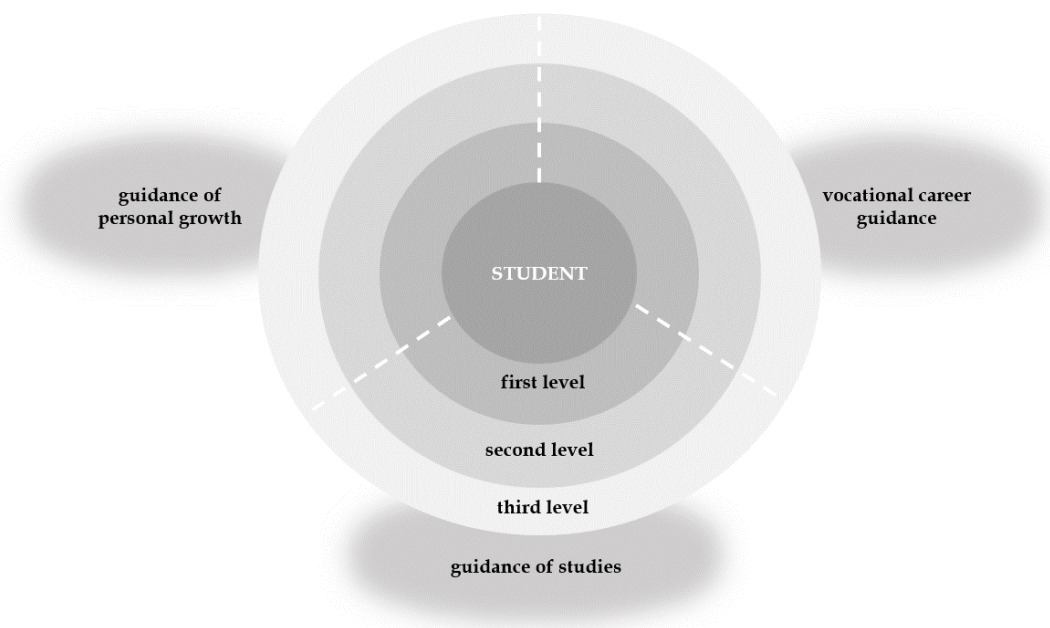


Figure 1. Framework for a holistic student-centred guidance model adapted to Finnish IVET (cf. Herranen & Penttinen, 2008, p. 10; Koskela & Rantanen, 2020, p. 121; Watts & Van Esbroeck, 1998, p. 23).

The starting points for the holistic student-centred guidance model are the student's need for guidance, the accessibility of guidance services in terms of both location and availability, pre-emption of problems, and multi-professional cooperation (Ala-Krekola-Suni, 2012, p. 35). In the model, the guidance content areas are study guidance, professional career guidance, and personal growth guidance (Watts & Van Esbroeck, 1998, p. 22). These three content areas of guidance are interrelated and interconnected (Ala-Krekola-Suni, 2012, p. 35).

Study guidance supports the student's agency and choices, especially when studying and learning. Professional career guidance supports professional development, career choices and transitions in working life. Personal growth guidance means supporting the person's life situation and clarifying the related personal and social questions. The model emphasises the overlapping nature of the content areas, cooperation between guidance actors and the holistic nature of guidance issues from the perspective of the individual (Vanhalakka-Ruoho, 2014, p. 35; Watts & Van Esbroeck, 1998, p. 22).

The different guidance actors are grouped into three different levels, the first of which is part of formal teaching (Watts & Van Esbroeck, 2000), which in this case means IVET. This first level includes teaching staff, such as vocational teachers and tutors, who interact regularly and closely with the student in the teaching and learning processes (Herranen & Penttinen, 2008, p. 12; Watts & Van

Esbroeck, 2000, p. 178). Teaching staff should provide guidance to the student in each content area of the holistic guidance model (Tuomela et al., 2020).

At the second level are the actors linked to teaching within a vocational institution, such as study counsellors, special needs teachers, and student affairs office personnel, who each have guidance tasks. They are often specialists within the educational institution, and their guidance work focuses on more individual, personal guidance and on resolving problems (Herranen & Penttinen, 2008, p. 12; Watts & Van Esbroeck, 2000, p. 178). IVET teachers guide their students towards these second level support services and operate also as guidance partners in multidisciplinary cooperation (Koskela & Rantanen, 2020, pp. 120–121).

At the third level, there are various differentiated actors who specialise in different guidance content areas. These third-level actors include people who support personal growth – such as a public health nurses, social workers, and psychologists – as well as actors in vocational and workplace guidance, such as career counsellors and workplace instructors. This third guidance level includes specialised guidance actors who are not involved in direct pedagogical activities, but support students' learning in many ways (Herranen & Penttilä, 2008, p. 12; Watts & Van Esbroeck, 2000, p. 178).

Guidance that supports the building of competence identities

The aim of education is to develop the functional capacity of future citizens and therefore guiding the identity process as a tool and a conscious goal of teaching is justified (Ropo, 2015, s. 29). Identity is built through social processes in a variety of contexts, meaning through relationships with other people and groups of people. A personal identity is what an individual wants to present about themselves in different situation. When telling about themselves and their lives, the students build their personal identity. Everyone relates their own personal identity to the identity which is given or offered to them by others (Rodgers & Scott, 2008; Virkkala, 2020, pp. 145–146)

The concept of competence identity is based on Christiansen's (1999) conception of competence, which is an identity based on one's skills and abilities. He describes the building of identity as a process where the individual acquires new competence and compensates for possible shortcomings by acquiring the extra skills needed alongside their existing competence (Christiansen, 1999, pp. 553–554). The building of competence identity is based on constructivist theory of learning, in which the student builds new knowledge based on previous knowledge as a result of his or her own actions (cf. Geurts & Meijers, 2009, p. 491; Virkkala, 2020, p. 146).

In connection with competence-based training, competence identity has been examined from the perspective of being and doing (Gonsalves & Zaidi, 2016; Jarvis-Selinger et al., 2012, pp. 1185–1186). One example of this would be

competence-based practical nurse training in which the aim is both to become a practical nurse in terms of one's competence and also to have the identity of a practical nurse in different roles and communities (cf. Colley et al., 2003, p. 23; Gonsalves & Zaidi, 2016; Jarvis-Selinger et al., 2012, pp. 1185–1186). From the perspective of competence identity, VET is about a process of growth towards a particular professional identity, with the training providing comprehensive support to this growth process (Colley et al., 2003).

The building and updating of competence identity can be supported by developing the student's views of themselves as a learner, expert, and worker (Figure 2). Different views of one's own agency and competence – which take shape through interaction and feedback – support the students in achieving their goals (cf. Ahlgren & Tett, 2010; Jarvis-Selinger et al., 2012, pp. 1185–1186). Different views support students to understand their own competencies and developmental needs and means more deeply. From the perspective of agency and competence building, it is important that the student recognises their own competence and can set goals related to their studies (Colley et al., 2003; Hegna, 2019; Raudasoja et al., 2019). Being a student supports the learner's ability to influence the ways they acquire competence and the emphases of their studies (Klotz et al., 2014; Raudasoja et al., 2019). When an individual is aware of what knowledge and skills they need to develop throughout their life, they can be helped to define how, where, when, and through whom they can acquire new knowledge and skills (Savickas et al., 2009, pp. 244–245).

Competence identity is built and shaped through interaction in social environments, and it is closely connected to agency and competence (Raudasoja et al., 2019). Building a competence identity is a multidimensional, multi-layered, dynamic process that extends through the whole of life and involves the individual as an active agent in identifying their own competence (Raudasoja et al., 2021). In this study competence identity is viewed as an ongoing process in which the different guidance actors support students – to acquire new competencies, in their personal growth and achieve a deeper understanding of themselves as learners, experts, and professionals.

From the perspective of building a student's mosaic-like competence identity, workplace-orientated and competence-based competence acquisition are important for being able to construct one's role as an expert in different learning and work communities and to assess one's activities comprehensively in relation to the requirements of working life (cf. Ferm, 2021; Hegna, 2019; Klotz et al., 2014; Raudasoja et al., 2019). During their IVET training, the learners acquire competence that enables them to find employment in tasks that correspond to their competence both now and in the future (Ahlgren & Tett, 2010; Gonsalves & Zaidi, 2016; Raudasoja et al., 2019).

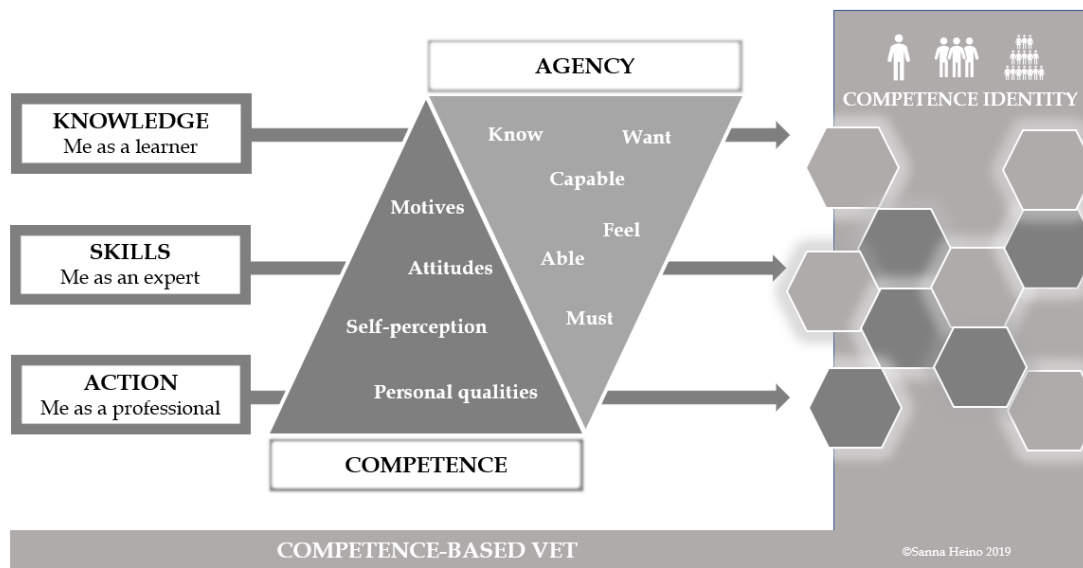


Figure 2. Building competence identity in competence-based VET (Raudasoja et al., 2019).

Research data and analysis

Data collection

The purpose of the study was to describe how holistic guidance supports the student's competence identity in Finnish competence- and work-based IVET by interviewing students and teachers in IVET. Research permits were obtained from the four IVET institutions. We had a contact person in all four IVET institutions who send invitation letters to students and vocational teachers, representing as wide differentiation in gender, background, and professional field as possible. The interviewees gave their consent for the interviews. In total, 44 people participated in the interviews. Of these, 15 were IVET students (7 men and 8 women), and 29 were vocational teachers (12 men and 17 women). The interviews with teachers lasted around 45 minutes and the student interviews lasted around 30 minutes. The three interviewers were the authors of this article, who have previously worked as teachers in IVET but were not known to the interviewees.

The main question of the study was: How can a holistic student-centred guidance model support the building of the student's competence identity in Finnish initial vocational qualifications? The answer to this question was sought out using the following sub-questions:

1. What were IVET students' perceptions on their holistic guidance needs and guidance actors?
2. What holistic guidance roles did the teachers feel they had in Finnish initial vocational qualifications?
3. What kind of framework could describe students' holistic guidance needs?

The data was collected as semi-structured thematic interviews with teachers and students in IVET during the years 2018 and 2019. The interview questions were based on the personalisation of Finnish vocational education and training, which is defined in legislation. All the interviews included the same key themes in the personal study plan which are previously acquired competence, acquiring missing competence in different learning environments, demonstrating competence, details of guidance and support measures, and the student's future plans, but the exact form of the questions and the order of the topics varied (Hirsjärvi et al., 2004). The interview questions provided the information for the research questions, both regarding the implementation of holistic guidance and the development of competence identity in IVET. The information obtained during an interview is always tied to the particular research environment, which in this case is IVET and the holistic guidance carried out there in the building of the student's competence identity, which is of interest for this particular research (Silverman, 1993, pp. 90–114). What stood out in the interviews was the interviewees' experiences of the matter being studied and their ability and willingness to discuss the topic (Kylmä & Juvakka, 2007, pp. 79–80). The research has been carried out according to the criteria set for scientific research (Finnish Advisory Board on Research Integrity, 2019).

Methodological approaches of analysis

In this study the analysis method was abductive qualitative content analysis, which is located in between inductive and deductive approach. The abductive approach considers inductive reasoning and a theoretical framework when carrying out the analysis. This study examined the respondents' views on the building of competence identity and on teachers views on their guidance tasks and roles from holistic student-centred guidance and the responses were mirrored to the theoretical framework and experience-based knowledge obtained in practice (Tuomi & Sarajärvi, 2002, pp. 113–117). The theoretical approach of the analysis had not been decided before the interviews, so it did not guide the interview themes. The theoretical analysis is implied and involved certain theoretical linkages, such as the holistic guidance model (Herranen & Penttinen, 2008, p. 10; Koskela & Rantanen, 2020, p. 121; Watts & Van Esbroeck, 1998, p. 23) and the competence identity model (Raudasoja et al., 2019) used as the framework for this study. The theoretical frameworks helped to code the

data, combine them, and create new levels of guidance to suit Finnish initial vocational qualifications (cf. Tuomi & Sarajärvi, 2002, pp. 98–99). The goal is to search for a new way of theorising about the phenomenon.

The steps applied in the abductive qualitative content analysis were:

1. In the first phase of the analysis, the material was carefully examined in order to form an overview.
2. In the second phase the data were classified and coded into a table using the Excel software, applying a theory based on the Watts and Van Esbroeck (1998, p. 23), Koskela and Rantanen (2020, p. 121), and Herranen and Penttinen (2008, p. 10) frameworks, where the scope of the guidance actors' range of tasks and guidance content areas are related to the student's holistic guidance need. At this point, it was noticed that the framework needed to be reformulated to suit Finnish IVET. The ideal framework was modified to suit Finnish competence- and work-based IVET by adding two new levels, and actors were relocated at different levels, based on empirical findings, considering the students' and teachers' perspectives. Then were checked that the text extracts corresponded to the topics of the holistic guidance new five levels.
3. In the third phase the data were analysed from the perspective of the building of the competence identity model (Raudasoja et al., 2019, and it was ensured that the compilation table contains all the important information.
4. The fourth phase examined how the holistic guidance model supports the development of students' competence identity (cf. Tuomi & Sarajärvi, 2002, pp. 113–117).

Research results

We present the results of the abductive content analysis in three parts according to the research questions. First, we look at what kind of guidance needs students have and from whom they receive guidance. Secondly, we look at what kind of guidance roles vocational teachers have. After this, we present the results of how the holistic guidance model supports the construction of the student's competence identity in vocational education.

IVET students' perceptions on their holistic guidance needs and guidance actors

Students receive guidance in competence-based IVET from many different people according to their personal situation. Key persons in terms of studies are vocational teachers, tutors, workplace instructors, study counsellors, and special needs teachers. Special support and guidance are provided by special needs

teachers and guidance counsellors and, in relation to wellbeing, also by student welfare personnel. In addition, some students receive support from people related to leisure time and hobbies, as well as employment experts.

Guidance offered by IVET teachers, tutors, and workplace instructors

The planning of student's initial vocational qualification studies began with a personalisation process in which study paths corresponding to their needs were shaped in cooperation with them as part of the personal competence development plan (PCDP), which was then updated whenever needed, and at least once a year, as the studies progressed. The students described to the IVET teachers their own life story, their different life stages, and their roles in different contexts, at the same time shaping an image of themselves as a learner and expert. Through this, they also got to know themselves better, strengthened their own positive agency, and constructed their own competence identity in interaction with the teacher. One student spoke of their PCDP in the following way:

So, the original PCDP was like a basic solution for the whole thing. So, my PCDP was set up so that [...] first I had to do the normal studies, but then I progressed a bit faster than all the others, so my PCDP was adapted, and the catering studies were added. Then after a year the general upper secondary school part was taken out ... so now it's like I have a completely personal study plan. (Student 16)

As part of the personalisation process, the students had assessed, together with the IVET teacher, the competence they had previously acquired, and what guidance, support, or possible special support measures the student needed, considering their entire life situation. They felt that they were heard and were able to influence the content of their studies if they so desired. One student described the processing of making the PCDP in the following way:

Everyone learns best in different ways. When making a PCDP, the focus should be on how this student would learn best. (Student 3)

Students acquire new competence – which gets recorded in their PCDP – through various formal and non-formal learning environments within either their VET institution, workplace, or free time. However, concrete doing in social interaction with others and under the guidance of teachers, instructors, and workplace instructors emerged as the most important form of acquiring competence in both VET institutions and workplaces. One student explained their preferred way of acquiring competence:

I learn best by doing it. It's just so good here because it's not just theory, so I remember it better. (Student 8)

Acquiring competence in the workplace was for the students a meaningful experience that increased self-efficacy and supported the student in developing

positive agency and building their competence identity (Goman et al., 2021). The students expressed the desire to be spending enough time in the workplace under good supervision. They defined good instruction as a process in which the instructors first show how it is done, then they themselves get to try it out and experiment, thus accumulating competence and developing their vocational skills. One student gave the following perspective on a successful training agreement period:

I got a lot more from the on-the-job-learning than I get from school – they do things differently there than how the teachers explain it. (Student 6)

The students also described the individual study paths shaped through the personalisation process, which involved personal solutions developed together with the teacher and workplace instructor based on the needs of both the student and the workplace. This allowed the students to assess their role as learners, experts, and workers and to construct their own activities comprehensively in relation to workplace requirements. One student described competence acquisition, guidance, and documentation as follows:

I've been in an on-the-job-learning now for four months straight. During my first year, I also had a two-month stretch in the workplace. We use Kotopro [an online tool for documentation], in which I upload pictures of work sites and jobs so that the teachers can follow what I'm doing. At the same time, this also means I can see myself for what I have done. (Student 10)

The students planned their professional future and lifelong learning by creating scenarios for their study path and building their competence identity. They were able to describe what knowledge and skills they needed to achieve their goal. Some students described clear decisions they had made about professional specialisation. An example of this is the following thought from a student who was completing a double degree:

So, my plan is that I focus on general upper secondary school and with those qualifications I apply to study psychology at university. If I don't get in, then maybe I'll work for a little while. Perhaps I'll do my military service. (Student 6)

The students felt that teachers supported their personal growth by supporting different life situations and by finding solutions for organising the studies in a different way. This is illustrated by the following student's account:

Most of them have been really encouraging and motivating, and if you have any problems in your personal life, they are really understanding, and you can openly ask for more time for something if you need it. I'd say they've been really supportive; the teachers have – in all different ways – at least for me. (Student 16)

Guidance offered by IVET study counsellors and special needs teachers

The students felt that they needed information, advice, and guidance from the IVET study counsellor to support the progress of their studies, so that they would be aware of what they needed to do and where to find the necessary information. The students considered it important to monitor their studies regularly together with the IVET teachers and IVET study counsellors in order to make sure that everything was done as it should be. One student explained their own situation as follows:

I would need more guidance. Yesterday, I went through with the IVET study counsellor some requirements that I had never heard about before. It seems that the student-teacher communication hasn't gone so well. And so now, in my final year, I'm starting to panic because I should be graduating in the spring but suddenly these surprises come along. If I had been more systematic with it, however, things would be better now. (Student 3)

The students would also have needed support and guidance to obtain the special support planned for them. The need for support and guidance had been specified in the PCDP as part of the personalisation process, but the necessary cooperation between the IVET teacher and the vocational special needs teacher had not taken place because the information had not been passed on to the special needs teacher (Goman et al., 2021). One student described thus the situation for themselves and their friends:

It was good that my reading disorder was discussed in the beginning, but then nothing was done about it - the talk should lead to action. I have managed OK, but I have friends who cannot manage alone without guidance and haven't found for themselves a learning method that works. (Student 3)

Guidance offered by student welfare personnel in IVET

The students considered it important that they can process questions related to their own studies, wellbeing, and health with persons not involved in their education programme, as part of the support for their personal growth. The importance of student welfare personnel was clearly visible in the way they helped students find their own strengths and resources and then learn to utilise these in developing their agency and building competence identity. One student offered the following perspective on their situation after receiving such support:

Daring to take on new challenges and not just staying at the starting line. (Student 3)

The support of student welfare personnel in maintaining and promoting student motivation was considered significant for promoting agency and progress in studies. The students had received guidance and started to understand the connections between learning at the VET institution and at the workplace as part

of a broader framework. This insight led to the following statement from one student:

The motivation that pushes you onwards here at school is important [for working life]. (Student 5)

Guidance offered by leisure time actors and hobby instructors

In the process of acquiring competence in line with their degree requirements and PCDP, students utilised opportunities for ubiquitous learning and hybrid leisure operating environments also during evenings, weekends, and holidays. In the verification and recognition of this competence, leisure time actors and hobby instructors worked in cooperation with teachers. One nursing student described how they had acquired professional competence during their free time:

I coach football 2-3 times a week. I have learnt about children through football - I know how to deal with them. (Student 1)

On the other hand, competence acquired during free time also developed the students' generic skills, such as group work, communication, and problem-solving skills. As in the student's example below, this competence can be acquired by taking care of shared matters in the VET institution and/or in wider society:

I was a tutor in comprehensive school and on the board of the student union, I am in the regional youth council and am aiming to become a tutor, and I'm now on the board of the student union again. (Student 8)

Guidance offered by employment specialists

In IVET, employment was an important goal for many students, and some of them were already in employment alongside their vocational studies. From the student perspective, the most familiar employers were the instructors and personnel managers at on-the-job learning environments - people they had got to know through on-the-job learning and then received both substitute work as well as evening, weekend, and summer work. The employment prospects were not strong in all sectors, so the students felt it was important to establish relationships with workplaces where they were acquiring competence, receiving professional career guidance, and getting support for personal growth. Under the teachers' guidance, the students also familiarised themselves with recruitment companies and the possibilities for subsidised employment. One student described their process of finding employment in the following words:

During my last on-the-job-learning, I got a job at an old people's home and now I got a summer job there. (Student 7)

IVET teachers and their roles in the holistic guidance framework

What kind of guidance roles did the IVET teachers have? Based on the qualitative content analysis of the IVET teacher interview material, three key objectives were found for the teachers' guidance roles:

- Supporting growth
- Guidance of learning
- Career guidance

Supporting growth means that IVET teachers support the student's growth into a civilised person and a member of society as the Finnish law of VET requires. Guidance of learning means supporting the student's operational capabilities, attitudes, knowledge, and skills that influence learning and maintain motivation to study. Career guidance supports the student's agency, professional development, choices, and transitions to working life.

Supporting growth

In this study IVET teachers and tutors/instructors are seen as supporters of the student's growth because they interacted closely with the student in the process of competence acquisition (see also Goman et al., 2021). Some VET institutions had experimented with a system in which VET teachers acted as students' personal tutors throughout their studies. The personal tutor offered the student holistic guidance, in which the whole life situation and related personal matters were discussed. One IVET teacher described the role of the personal tutor as follows:

The person who sees the student every day, supervises them and makes a plan for them. (Teacher 19)

IVET teachers were strongly involved in supporting the student's life management through guidance and support as well as through special support provided in cooperation with vocational special needs teachers and IVET study counsellors. They also cooperated with student welfare personnel and workplaces to support the student's growth. They would have liked to guide and support students more than they were currently able to with the resources allocated to them. This situation is illustrated by the following example:

Young people have a great deal of problems, and they are not self-directed. The lostness of those in need of special support is really concerning. (Teacher 9)

Guidance of learning

The IVET teachers defined their own role as a supervisor of student learning from many different perspectives. They guided the student's studies individually and prepared the PCDP together with the student and, where needed, also with other

people involved in supporting their studies. The teachers supported the student's personal growth and learning in a student-oriented manner, strengthened the student's positive agency by considering strengths, and supported the students by offering opportunities to acquire competence in an individual manner and build a competence identity. One teacher described in the following way the opportunities available for acquiring competence in the school's workshop:

You [the student] can practise as much as you need. Special support and guidance are readily available here. (Teacher 16)

IVET teachers collaborated with IVET study counsellors in areas related to the students' progress in their studies, choices made during the studies, and planning and applications for further studies, all as part of the vocational career guidance and study guidance offered. One IVET teacher described the division of work between themselves, and the study counsellor as follows:

The study counsellor gives precise facts, while the teacher gives the overall guidelines. (Teacher 12)

IVET teachers also cooperated with special needs teachers and workplace instructors in matters related to the student's special support and guidance, which also served to support the student's personal growth. Multidisciplinary cooperation across professional and organisational boundaries emerged as a key factor in situations where the IVET teachers had become concerned about the progress of a student's studies and the need for pedagogical support. One IVET teacher described how the initiation of multidisciplinary cooperation could be summarised in the following question:

Are there learning-related problems and how can support be provided? (Teacher 14)

The IVET teachers highlighted the significant role of student welfare personnel in guiding the student's learning and in supporting personal growth. The IVET teachers said that they discussed with the student welfare personnel the student's physical, psychological, and social wellbeing as well as the ways in which the student could be supported in a multiprofessional manner. In some cases, the field selected by the student is not suitable for them, due for example to allergies that they have, so in such cases a new, more suitable field is sought out together by the student, the teacher, the IVET study counsellor, and the student welfare personnel. In this case, the key question for the cooperation is:

How do you guide a special needs student towards a new, more suitable field? (Teacher 17)

Career guidance

IVET teachers tell that they play a significant role in career guidance of their students. They carry out career guidance-related cooperation that directly involves employers, public Employment Service offices, recruitment companies, subsidised employment actors, rehabilitative work actors, and various kinds of workshops.

From the IVET teachers' point of view, workplace instructors also play a significant role in students' career guidance. The workplace instructors visited the school to discuss work-related issues and promoted entrepreneurship. The IVET teachers planned competence acquisition together with the student and the workplace instructor in a job-specific manner. They described how they supported workplace instructors in their tasks, for example through workplace instructor training.

In addition to helping them acquire competence at the workplace, IVET teachers told of how they supported students' access to employment in many other ways. They carried out a variety of cooperation projects with companies, guided the students to apply for occasional work directly from companies, and visited various recruitment events together with the students. Sometimes IVET teachers were called by companies and asked if students were available for work. Sometimes finding employment for the student was more challenging, and the IVET teacher used all available networks to support the student in their transition to working life. One IVET teacher described their role in the following way:

I call around my own contacts and try to get the student into work through the back door. (Teacher 20)

The IVET teachers felt that the different leisure time actors and hobby instructors played their part in supporting and guiding the student's personal growth and the building of their competence identity in different kinds of hybrid operating environments. The IVET teachers recognised their significance as educators. One IVET teacher described in the following way the importance of hobbies in their own field:

Students acquire missing competence through hobbies. (Teacher 3)

A revised holistic student-centred guidance framework for Finnish VET

In this section, the results of the qualitative content analysis are presented using the revised holistic student-centred guidance framework, which was updated based on the content analysis results to include five levels of guidance actors. This expanded model fits better in the context of Finnish IVET (cf. Herranen & Penttinen, 2008; Koskela & Rantanen, 2020; Watts & Van Esbroeck, 1998). The new model includes the following levels:

1. IVET teachers, tutors, and workplace instructors

This first level includes teaching staff, such as vocational teachers, tutors, and workplace instructors, who interact regularly and closely with the student in the teaching and learning process, but also when students are building their competence identity. They are supporting growth, guiding of learning, and doing career guidance in IVET in Finland. Compared to the original holistic guidance framework (Herranen & Penttinen, 2008, p. 12; Watts & Van Esbroeck, 2000, p. 178), workplace instructors were added to the first level, because they play a key role as instructors in Finnish competence-based and working life-oriented IVET.

2. IVET study counsellors and special needs teachers

At the second level are the study counsellors and special needs teachers (Herranen & Penttinen, 2008, p. 12; Watts & Van Esbroeck, 2000, p. 178). The focus of their work is supporting growth, guiding of learning, and doing career guidance in IVET.

3. Student welfare personnel in IVET

At the third level are student welfare personnel in IVET such as a public health nurses, social workers, and psychologists. This third guidance level includes specialised guidance actors who are not involved in direct pedagogical activities, but support students' learning and growing in many ways (Herranen & Penttilä, 2008, s. 12; Watts & Van Esbroeck, 2000, s. 178).

4. Leisure time actors and hobby instructors

Based on the research results, a fourth level was added to the framework of student-centered holistic guidance, which includes leisure and hobby instructors. In competence-based IVET, competence can also be acquired in leisure time, so the instructors of these activities play a significant role in supporting growth and building the students' competence identity.

5. Employment specialists

Based on the research results, a fifth level was added to the framework of student-centered holistic guidance, which includes employment specialists. They play a significant role in enabling working life-oriented IVET for students, offering part-time job during their studies, and employing students after completing their degree.

The number of actors in student-centred holistic guidance at the five different levels shows how complex guidance processes and support are and emphasises that many actors are needed to complete the task. The actors must also work

closely together to ensure that the student's holistic guidance is implemented in the best possible way.

Conclusions and reflection

This study deals with the building of the competence identity in competence-based Finnish IVET and how holistic guidance can support it. The research results are in line with the results of Musset and Kurekova (2018), European Commission (2020), and Korhonen and Nieminen (2010), providing a framework for multidisciplinary and holistic guidance in VET that considers all areas of life – a student guidance process in which the work of many different dimensions of guidance actors and guidance factors are intertwined, supporting the building of students' competence identity.

Based on the results, vocational teachers had three different roles in their guidance of students. Depending on the context and particular situation, they supported personal growth, guided learning, and provided career guidance, in line with the overall results of Watts and Van Esbroeck (1998, p. 23), Koskela and Rantanen (2020, p. 121), and Herranen and Penttinen (2008, p. 10). According to Helander et al. (2020), multidisciplinary guidance and support in VET can be viewed as a network of service systems. The research results also highlighted the boundary expertise of guidance actors, in line with the findings of Vehviläinen (2014) and Onnismaa (2007).

The research results indicated that building competence identity (see e.g., Christiansen, 1999) should be seen as a process, in which an individual acquires new competence that is needed alongside their existing competence. In Finnish VET, the building of the students' competence identity was promoted by supporting their agency and developing their views of themselves as learners, experts, and employees, in keeping with the findings of Raudasoja et al. (2019). Different views of one's own agency and competence – which take shape through interaction and feedback – supported the IVET students in achieving their goals.

Based on the research results described above, a revised framework was put together for holistic student-oriented guidance in Finnish IVET and VET (Figure 3). This framework describes how active student agency and multidisciplinary guidance work can support the building and updating of the student's competence identity.

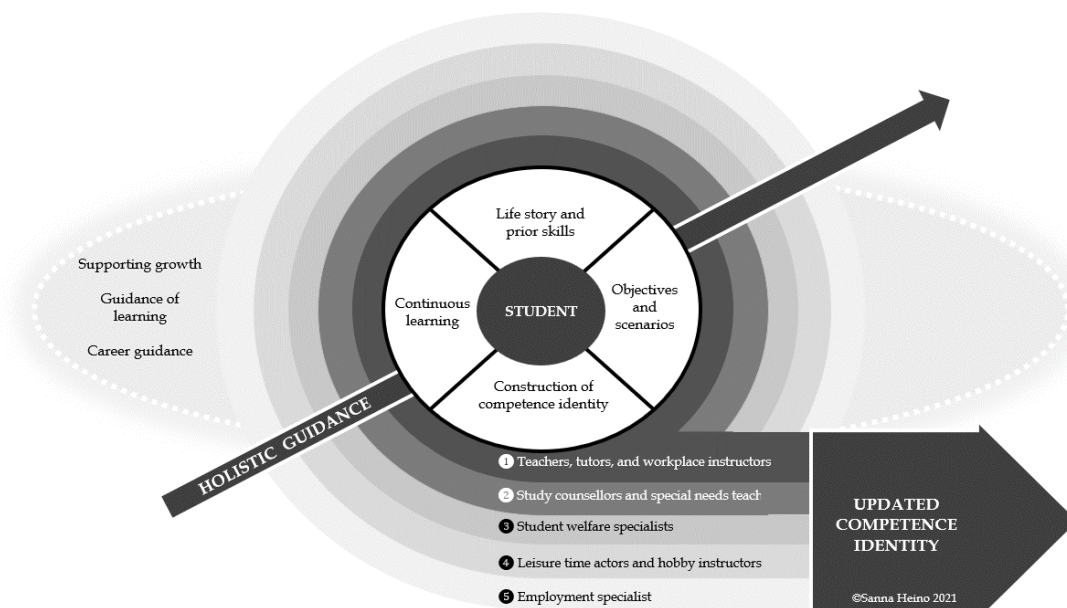


Figure 3. A revised holistic student-centred guidance framework for Finnish vocational education and training.

This holistic student-centred guidance framework for Finnish VET is an idealised version of reality. The personal needs of IVET students for holistic guidance may differ from what is described in the framework. There are also differences between educational institutions and workplaces in the number of teaching and guidance staff, their competencies, and the resources available to them.

The core of the framework describes the student's active agency in the building of their study path and their own life (cf. Vehviläinen, 2014). A PCDP is prepared for each student, and as part of this, the student expresses their life story in a way that considers all areas of life and describes their prior learning. As part of the personalisation process. As part of the goal setting, the student also participates in making a plan that covers the necessary guidance and support measures as well as any special support measures for supporting the student in building their new competence profile and competence identity (cf. Finlex Data Bank, 2017).

One possible limitation of this study is the small number of interviewees, and they were all made in IVET, meaning that the analysed results could have been somewhat different if a larger number of VET interviews had been carried out or a different method of data collection had been used. However, the reliability of the interviews is increased by the fact that the same thematic areas were examined with all the interviewees and the data has been analysed by three researchers who then together formed a shared view of the data. The limitations

of this research give good reason to extend the research either by carrying it out at a broader and even international level – thus providing more reliable results – or by focusing on the interviews only on the students' views.

As changes have taken place in working life and in the operating environment for VET, guidance has become more complex. The complexity of guidance issues is a challenge for the coordination and development of guidance work. This holistic student-centred guidance framework shaped for Finnish VET can be applied by education providers, for example, when updating their guidance plans. The framework can also be utilised for orientating teaching and guidance staff so that they are familiar with the guidance objectives set for their work. In addition, the holistic student-centred guidance framework for Finnish IVET is suitable for illustrating the diversity and multiplicity of guidance work in the training of vocational teachers, student counsellors and special needs teachers. It is essential to notice that in guidance processes the students learn about themselves and their own competences, and the process gives them skills for future career planning.

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