

# Vocationally oriented education and training at higher education levels

Expansion & diversification in  
European countries  
(Volume 6)

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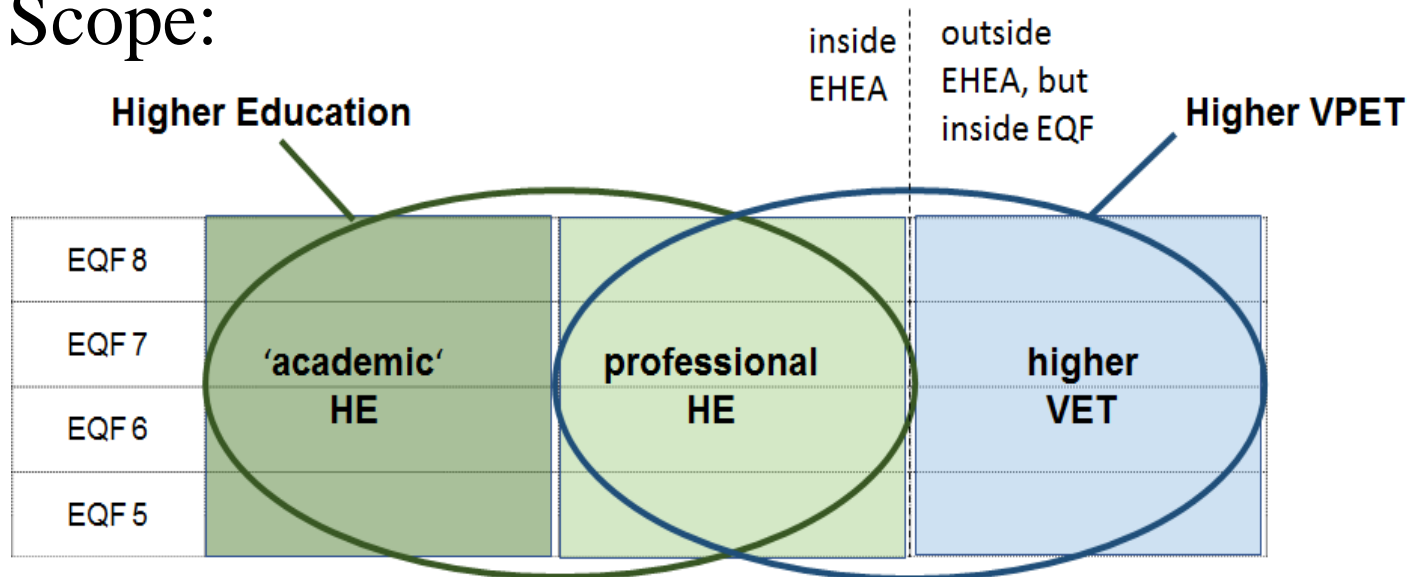
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# Research methodology and scope

Literature review, statistics, case studies (AT, DE, EE, FI, FR, IT, NL, NO, UK-England; Nursing, Engineering), synthesis

Scope:

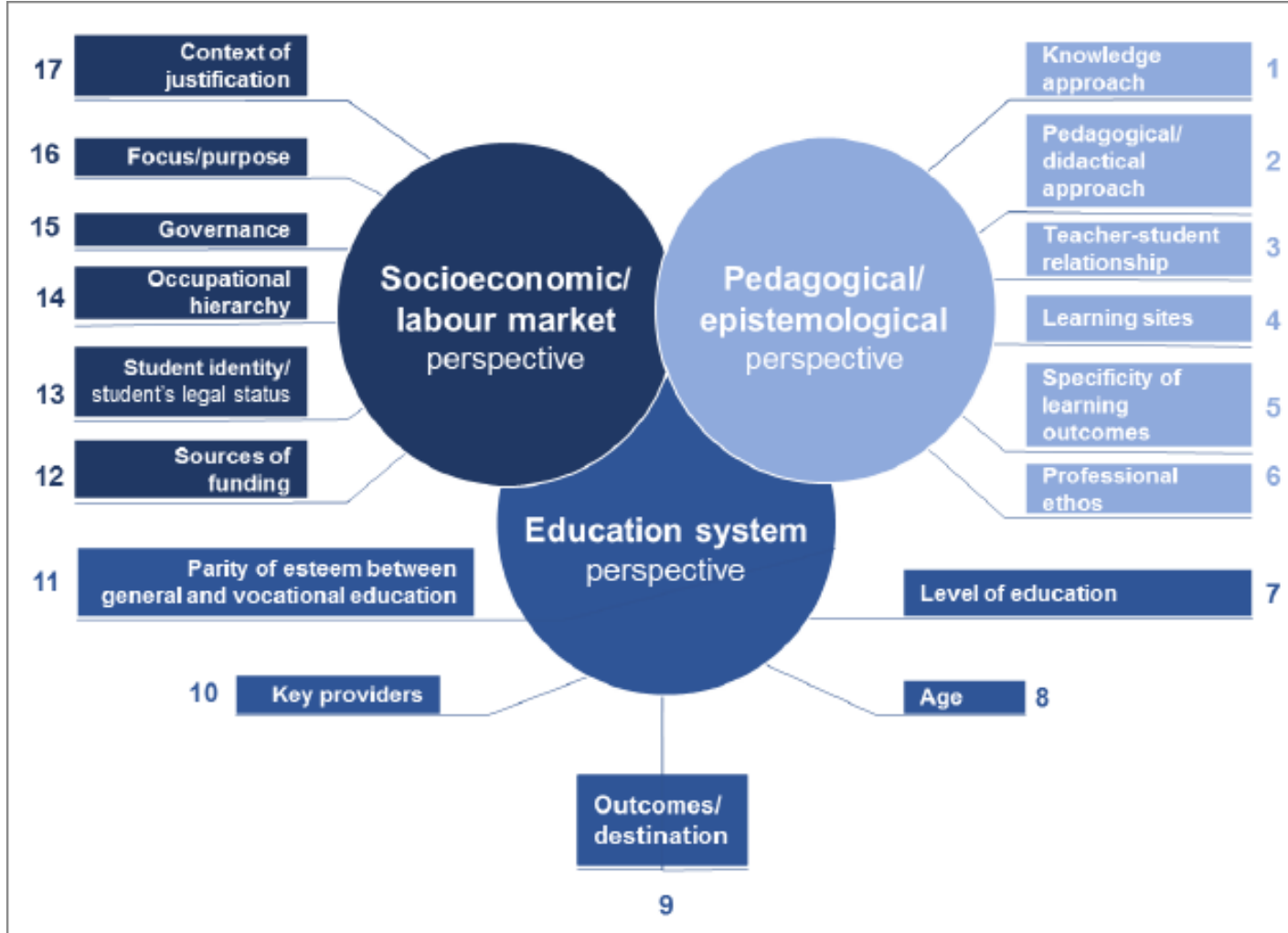


‘Academic or Vocational drift’?

➡ Changes 1995-2015?

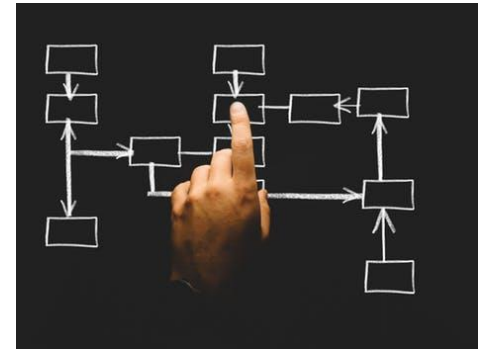


# Analytical framework



Source: Cedefop (2017). The changing nature and role of vocational education and training in Europe Volume 1 Conceptions of vocational education and training: an analytical framework, p. 31

# Education system perspective #1



## Evidence of expansion of VET at higher levels

\_\_ across the Western world since the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, across other countries at the start of the 21<sup>st</sup> century

## Diversification – institutional landscape

\_\_ professional HE: in most cases: separate strand of HE (‘binary system’) – ‘academic drift’ of VET and ‘vocational drift’ of HE

\_\_ higher VET: very diverse field (e.g. post-secondary level VET, higher-level CVET offered within and outside the formal education system)

## Perception of higher VPET

\_\_ image of VET is also lower at higher levels (compared to traditional academic universities) – exceptions: e.g. AT, DE, FR



# Socio-economic or labour market perspective



## Governance and funding - ‘vocational drift’

- \_\_HE: strengthened links with the labour market and employer involvement in governance structures (less strong in financing)
- \_\_higher VET: no significant changes; traditionally strong links to the labour market and employer involvement

## Policy rationale for ‘academic and/or vocational drift’

- \_\_rationale and main drivers are often the same for both ‘drift’ processes (securing supply of highly skilled labour, innovation and economic growth, individual and social progression)
- \_\_‘vocational drift’: often even stronger focus on employability of graduates and professional relevance of programmes/qualifications offered at higher levels
- \_\_‘academic drift’: stronger emphasis on the need to meet the increased knowledge and skills demands and on attracting prospective students

# Epistemological or pedagogical perspective



## Profiles of VET at higher education levels

- \_\_ often include both academic and vocational components
- \_\_ to some extent, there is convergence between different types of higher education programmes
- \_\_ higher VET: often maintain traditional focus on applied knowledge
- \_\_ transversal learning outcomes – shift towards broader profiles

## Pedagogical/didactical approach, learning sites, teachers

- \_\_ strong focus on practice-oriented learning and WBL – ‘vocational drift’ of HE (internships, dual programmes, apprenticeships)
- \_\_ some indication that ‘academic’ principles or research competences have been more strongly emphasised in professional HE
- \_\_ professional experience is increasingly important for teachers at higher levels, academic requirements in some cases also emphasised even more

# Main challenges

Similar challenges/tensions/issues as for VET in general



- \_\_ **Juggling between meeting labour market demands and wider societal values** – reflection on impact
- \_\_ **Finding the right balance between ‘academic’ and ‘vocational’ principles / theoretical knowledge and practical skills/competences** – tensions, profiling
- \_\_ **Achieving parity of esteem between more academically oriented and more vocationally oriented qualifications at HE levels** – poor image of VET in general, lack of awareness and understanding of the purposes and functions of VET at higher levels (complexity, diversity), lack of **permeability**
  - \_\_ enhancement of **awareness** – e.g. career guidance activities
  - \_\_ enhancement of **visibility** – e.g. in statistics, labelling



# Future developments?

Country	Professional HE			Higher VET	
	HE structures	Participation	Dynamic	Participation	Dynamic
<b>Austria</b>	binary (very clear dividing lines)	medium	slightly increasing	high	stable
<b>Estonia</b>	binary	high	slightly decreasing	low	?
<b>Finland</b>	binary (very clear dividing lines)	high	stable	low	slightly increasing
<b>France</b>	multi-type/fragmented; partial unitary	high	increasing	low	stable
<b>Germany</b>	binary (combination of clear and more blurred dividing lines)	high	slightly increasing	medium	advanced vocational examinations: decreasing; trade and technical schools: slightly increasing/stable
<b>Italy</b>	university dominated	low	increasing	—	—
<b>Netherlands</b>	binary (combination of clear and more blurred dividing lines)	high	increasing	low	? (1)
<b>Norway</b>	binary – developments towards unified	high (2)	decreasing? (3)	low	stable
<b>UK-England</b>	unified	medium	slightly decreasing	low	stable (4)

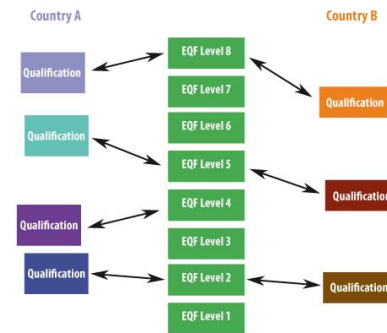
# Outlook

## Taking a lifelong learning perspective vs. dichotomy between sectors of education

distinction between VET (in our case: higher VET) and HE (differentiated between ‘academic’ and professional HE) does not always do justice to reality – blurring boundaries

## EQF for lifelong learning

with the progressive implementation of NQFs in European countries, the EQF for lifelong learning has the potential to increasingly be used as a cross-sectoral reference point for the level dimension of qualifications systems.



This can support shifting the focus from looking at sectors and sub-sectors to exploring the profile and content of qualifications offered at EQF levels 5 to 8 as well as the extent to which they reflect ‘academic’ and ‘vocational’ principles or their combination.

# Thank you!

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