



# PROJECT WEEK REPORT

4th project week | 20 – 24 January 2020  
Kainuun ammattopisto, Kajaani, Finland

## ABSTRACT

Because of the changes in working life, Vocational Education and Training must be able to meet these changes and requirements for education. Curricula must have a tight connection to working-life. The qualifications are no more based on time but on competences. All these new insights create a need to build a system where it is possible to start the studies and study individually.

## QUALITY CATEGORY

- ✓ Guidance
- ✓ Learning
- Examination

## QMS4VET Consortium

The partners within the QMS4VET project are:

- Aventus ([www.ventus.nl](http://www.ventus.nl))
- ATEC ([www.atec.pt](http://www.atec.pt))
- BBS Syke EUROPASCHULE ([www.bbs-syke.de](http://www.bbs-syke.de))
- bit Schulungcenter ([www.bitschulungcenter.at](http://www.bitschulungcenter.at))
- West Lothian College ([www.west-lothian.ac.uk](http://www.west-lothian.ac.uk))
- Kainuun ammattopisto ([www.kao.fi](http://www.kao.fi))

## INTRODUCTION

Kainuun ammattiopisto offers vocational education and training for young people and adults in Social and Health Care, Culture, Business and Administration, Nature and Land Based Industries, Tourism and Catering and Technology and Logistics. Kainuun ammattiopisto operates mainly in Kainuu and Kuusamo region and it has a unit in Vantaa near Helsinki. Kainuun ammattiopisto is a municipality enterprise owned by the city of Kajaani.

Currently in Kainuun ammattiopisto there are 2 300 young and adult students studying for a vocational upper secondary qualification, 3 500 students in other adult education and about 400 students on the average in apprenticeship training. There are currently about 300 employees.

During the 3<sup>rd</sup> QMS4VET project week, Kainuun ammattiopisto put together a team of staff members and students from many sectors to introduce the Project Week Participants Individual and Flexible Pathways in Vocational Education and Training.

For more information about the QMS4VET project and other project week reports see [www.ventus.nl/qms4vet](http://www.ventus.nl/qms4vet)

## OBJECTIVES

The following objectives were set for sharing best practices with respect to Kainuun ammattiopisto's Individual study paths/programs:

In order to realise individual study paths/programs, Kainuun ammattiopisto ensures that:

1. The admission process works as smoothly as possible and it is possible to start the studies at any time of the year;
2. The students can study according to their personal needs and schedules;
3. Learning processes can happen in different kind of environments.

## METHODOLOGY

In the beginning of 2018 the legislations of Vocational Education and Training in Finland changed a lot. The reasons for that were versatile:

- Occupations and jobs are changing rapidly;
- Curricula must have a tight connection to working-life;
- There is need for individual paths to get the qualification;
- The qualifications are no more based on time but on competences;
- Public funding had been cut almost each year during the last few years;
- Complexity of funding processes; youth-education, adult education, training of unemployed people needed to be more simple.

In order to ensure the overall aim (individual learning routes), the following objectives have to be met:

**1. Flexible admissions:**

- The students can apply for school 365 days a year;
- The studies are targeted to get a vocational qualification or just to update skills.

**2. Personal competence development plan:**

- All the students can have personal study paths according to the need they have;
- The students have personal study time;
- It is possible to move between different qualifications;
- Studies can continue all year round.

**3. Different ways to learn:**

- Learning can happen in many different ways either at school or in working life;
- Tutoring process is organised and monitored.

## SWOT ANALYSIS

The following analyses the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) of KAO's case study (the offering and organisation of individual study paths).

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Government led initiative</li> <li>• WILMA (student data system): flexible, transparent – school, parent, student, ministry. Tracks history (recognition of prior learning)</li> <li>• VALMA: student support methodology</li> <li>• Competency based</li> <li>• 365 days/year</li> <li>• Start any time</li> <li>• Mentor interview – focus on student goals ensuring motivation is higher</li> <li>• Students are able to switch courses/units (where applicable)</li> <li>• Good employer relationships</li> <li>• Mindset and commitment of teachers</li> <li>• Distance learning</li> <li>• High flexibility</li> <li>• TRUST – on all levels</li> <li>• Strong relationship between schools and companies</li> <li>• Easier adaption of for student to real life conditions and requirements</li> <li>• Initiation of entrepreneurship included in the curricula</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduced relationships built between students if there's less face to face contact</li> <li>• Students don't feel part of/identify as part of the group</li> <li>• Socialisation between students is reduced, especially in small groups</li> <li>• Mentor needs to <b>fully</b> understand needs and intrinsic motivations of individual students</li> <li>• Consistency of evaluation of markers/assessors especially in the workplace</li> <li>• Wellbeing of teachers due to the demands placed on them</li> <li>• Challenging for teachers to deal with short-term changes and continuous flexibility</li> <li>• Mixed age groups can be a challenge</li> <li>• Parents regard less-free periods as holidays for students: discontent, have to adapt, have to learn to trust their own child</li> <li>• No times for internships abroad anymore</li> <li>• Dependence on willingness of teachers to change <b>mindset</b> etc, to fill in WILMA information</li> <li>• Dependence on time spent by teachers creating projects and engaging assignments</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Personal path creates a sense of belonging and commitment on the student's side</li> <li>• Frequent personal contact between personal mentor and student</li> <li>• Extra-curricular courses from other areas possible to combine with personalised plan</li> <li>• Student can finish quicker if you put in the effort</li> <li>• More family friendly – quicker completion of education if needed due to family commitments</li> <li>• Ability to pause learning if personal circumstances change</li> <li>• Recognition of previous learning</li> <li>• More practice approach is appealing to people with negative previous experiences of education</li> <li>• Students more motivated in comparison with the classic educational organisation as they have had more input into content studied – less chance to get bored</li> <li>• More inclusive to accommodate different abilities and any learning difficulties</li> <li>• Student and teachers are working together to solve problems</li> <li>• Students are taught to be self-sufficient – increase self-belief, creative thinking, problem-solving and other transferable skills</li> <li>• The credit system (recognition of past items) is small steps combined to big success.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dependence on knowledge of teachers</li> <li>• Dependence on skills of coaching</li> <li>• Dependence of good relationships between mentor and student</li> <li>• Dependence on amount of mentors you would have to have</li> <li>• Depends on strong and close relationship with companies</li> <li>• Awareness of student's previous skills</li> <li>• Lack of capability of students to make choices, express themselves</li> </ul>
<p><b>Opportunities</b></p>	<p><b>Threats</b></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students can easily change path</li> <li>• Companies can create their own workforce according to their specific needs</li> <li>• More lifelong learning</li> <li>• Companies get the chance to give directions to new paths, room for more innovations and quicker adaption in college to changes in the world of work</li> <li>• Opportunities for students to experience new technologies emerging in the market</li> <li>• Students can create mini-companies which can provide skills for future entrepreneurs</li> <li>• Students can earn while studying i.e. music gigs</li> <li>• Improve attractiveness of the VET system</li> <li>• Breaking up traditional school and structures, making them more future orientated environments</li> <li>• Individual learning is good marketing, publicity for school</li> <li>• Distance learning from across country</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students can abuse the trust and not complete/take part in tasks</li> <li>• Lack of socialisation between students could negatively affect work</li> <li>• Too much freedom for some students may hinder them completing their work</li> <li>• Political influence could affect success – enough time is needed to see if new system is successful</li> <li>• Employers (especially abroad) may be unsure of a student's qualification to what that means about their ability</li> <li>• Is WILMA sustainable long term?</li> <li>• High dependence on enough available companies for students to work in</li> <li>• Companies need to have the willingness and knowledge and time to train the students as well as running the business</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Appealing to a larger variety of students that otherwise couldn't study</li> <li>• Smaller school buildings therefore less heating/running costs etc.</li> <li>• Individual's ability to study at own pace— can finish quicker or slower depending on life's needs/career opportunities</li> <li>• Integration to workforce thanks to work experience/entrepreneurial opportunities</li> <li>• Countrywide IT/WILMA standards means working with other schools in Finland is easier</li> <li>• School can increase revenue with quicker turnover</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dependence on the economy, companies might not be able to keep students and have a long term focus</li> <li>• Depending on the reputation of the school/students companies might not be willing to take on students</li> <li>• Students choose another school because distance doesn't matter</li> <li>• Student could behave like a spoilt client</li> <li>• Present future support of companies – secure?</li> <li>• Economic situation might influence support of community and companies</li> <li>• Acquired skills might be too specialised/specific for employment</li> <li>• Long distance learning: students might prefer a school close to them and could lose personal contact</li> <li>• High dependency on technology</li> <li>• High investments needed (ICT/Staff Training)</li> <li>• Lots of experienced teachers are unhappy with the change (losing knowledge)</li> <li>• Motivation from students/teachers may disappoint over time</li> </ul>
--	--

### How to deal with the Weaknesses and Threats and to reduce these appropriately

#### Implementation:

Make the process of implementation strong and thorough by involving all parties. The goals, benefits, process and reason behind the new process need to be fully implemented and the mindset changed in everyone. There will need to be enough time to let the process take its time and not rush this.

#### Preparation of changes in teaching methods:

Support the teachers in being able to take on new tasks like mentoring, coaching by offer new training according to the individual needs and wishes. Manage teachers' health and well-being by ensuring the workload is not too overwhelming.

#### Government involvement:

Establish good relationship with relevant governmental institutions. Showing good results, having regular contact to keep each other updated and increase the government's confidence in the organisation.

#### Companies and other organisations for work placement:

Build strong, long term relationships with all parties involved. Explain the changes and reasons why. Ensure that the parties have staff willing and able to take on the mentoring role for the students in the organisation and offer support and guidance. You need to make sure that the best, most forward-thinking organisations, help to put the message across of the importance of the changes.

### Students:

Clear message on students being the worker and the teachers being the leader. Manage expectations. Ensure that students have enough support to work more independently than before. Support students to cope with the changes. Student support and guidance would potentially play a big part.

## RECOMMENDATION FOR STEP BY STEP IMPLEMENTATION

The following recommendations can be used when implementation of all or parts of Kainuun ammattiopisto's individual learning methodology is considered.

### Trust between all stakeholders is essential

- If possible, petition National Government of country to support a pilot with the possibility of funding to assist with the ICT and the commitment to roll out across the country. This would help with the implementation process.
- It is critical to identify an ICT supporting system that can support the flexible learning plan as WILMA does within Finland. It needs to be able to create the personal plan, timetables and transparency for all.

### The following points must be completed within partnership (school/companies) to ensure appropriate plans are in place:

- It is critical that one has created good working relationships with employers, and they understand the benefit to them and the industry for participating in the programme and developing the students.
- Implement measures to motivate teachers to change including their mindset to enable to them to see advantages of the system.
- Ensure that one has a strong curriculum which is structured, and can clearly evidence the prior learning.
- Well proven functioning system to deliver effective e-learning that is reliable and well supported. In addition, training for teachers to effectively deliver in this alternative method of teaching.
- Teaching staff can offer a flexible learning plan for students, but it is imperative that they follow internal processes/procedures to ensure the effectiveness of the programme.
- A clear marketing programme to attract students and other partners and to ensure they understand the offering and the benefits of the programme for them.

## EVALUATION

After analysing the Kainuu guidance system the following conclusions can be drawn:

### Advantages:

The guidance is according to the ECVET approach (knowledge, skills and competences) with a strong focus on a personalised study path and fully flexible adaptation to working life in order to develop the best possible competences for each learner. The goals are gained by a continuous personal mentoring process for each learner either face-to-face or using online channels to avoid unnecessary traveling.

**Disadvantages:**

As the presented guidance system is very intense when it comes to the interaction between teachers and learners it might create a high pressure on the involved teachers and mentors. The highly personalised and blended learning approach might lead to a lack of social learning skills.

**Tips for implementation:**

The Finnish approach is highly based on trust on all levels. Therefore previously executed control systems and bureaucracy need to be abolished and replaced by mutual trust, freedom and flexibility. The implementation of necessary change in mindset requires a high effort and bravery from all stakeholders and especially from the school/training center. A mandatory basis is the provided IT-system with a broad information data base and nationwide agreed competence-based system and further required data.

## APPENDICES

1. Agenda and Minutes 4th QMS4VET project week
2. Kainuun ammattiopisto presentations