Shaping the relationship between vocational and academic education

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Overview

1. Why to reflect on VET and its relation to academic education?
   • Socio-economic trends and challenges
   • Future skills demand

2. How to balance academic and vocational education?

3. Options for taking action

4. Conclusion
Socio-economic trends and challenges (selected)

1. Higher school grades & academic education
2. Social polarization in society and education
3. Digitization

Challenges:
What future skills are demanded?
How to balance vocational and academic education?
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Future skills demand (1): Digital technologies matter – but how?
Future skills demand (2):
Failed / delayed innovations – microwave ...

1947

Today
Future skills demand (3): Pictures on the future of work ...

Jean Marc Coté (1900)
Flying postman
Future skills demand (4)

Various studies investigating potential implications of digital technologies on labor market and future skills demand…
Future skills demand (5):
Future(s) of work – what most studies suggest …

in more developed economies, sectors

Creative Work

Routine Work done by people

Routine Work done by machines

in less developed economies, sectors

Complex problem-solving in technology-rich environments
Self-organised learning
Entrepreneurial skills
Social skills

Creating
Innovating
Evaluating
Critical thinking
Analyzing
Applying
Understanding
Remembering

High-order cognitive skills
Future skills demand (6): Development of ‘hybrid competences’

‘Hybrid competences’ such as
- High order cognitive skills
- Complex problem-solving in technology-rich environments
- Self-organized learning
- Social skills
- Entrepreneurial skills

Theory (knowing) ───► Personality (being) ───► Practice (doing)
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Balance between academic and vocational education (1): Traditional view (simplified)

Compulsory Schooling

Academic Education
- Knowledge
  - Scientific methods

Vocational Education
- Practical skills
  - Occupational socialization

Others
- Semi-/unskilled jobs

Higher Level Professions

Middle Level Occupations
Balance between academic and vocational education (2): Provisions in Belgium (FL)

Compulsory Schooling

Academic Education
- Bachelor
- Master
- PhD

Vocational Education
- Prof. Bachelor
- Short Cycle
- Technical programs
- Vocational programs (school based)
- Apprenticeships / Dual Learning

Others
- …
Balance between academic and vocational education (3): Differences and convergence

Competence profiles

Academic education
- Excellence-Uni
- University College (research focus)
- College (employment focus)
  *Vocational drift*

Vocational education
- Academic drift
  - Flagship-VET
  - Traditional-VET
  - Low-Status-VET

Hybrid competences
- Scientific methods, knowledge, theories (know what; know why)
- Practical skills (know how)
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Options for taking action: Potential futures of VET

1. Keep AE exclusive – remove overlappings between AE and VET!
2. Increase attractiveness of VET programs!
3. Increase permeability from VET to AE!
4. Implement models integrating vocational and academic programs / degrees!
5. Develop a parallel, but separate vocational track architecture covering the entire pathway from apprenticeship to academic degrees!
Conclusion

1. Education system faces two (conflicting) demands:
   (1) upgrading programs in academic and vocational education to meet future skills demand;
   (2) integrating vulnerable students with a high risk of being left behind!

2. Parts of academic and vocational education are converging – there are new opportunities to overcome traditional barriers!

3. VET in Belgium needs some boost in reputation – attractiveness marketing won’t be enough! Because …
the proof of the pudding is in the eating