

Swift transition from studies to work for students in Higher Vocational Education

Nine out of ten students in Higher Vocational Education were employed one year after having completed their studies. Many students in the vocational programmes were relatively established on the labour market also before taking the vocational programme, as is shown by a new study from IFAU.

Almost 90 per cent of the students that were admitted to Higher Vocational Education (PSV- or HVC-education) between 2006 and 2008 were employed one year after having completed the vocational programme. Students in the vocational programmes had a strong position on the labour market already before taking the vocational programme, since an average of 70 per cent were employed. One year after the course had been completed, those who had completed the programme had increased their yearly incomes from an average of slightly more than SEK 100 000 to about SEK 250 000.

– The large increase in income shows that students seem to have obtained better-quality jobs, according to Alexander Westerberg who is one of the authors of the report. Many people changed employers; they worked more and had better paid jobs after completing the programme.

– He continues to say that it is, however, not possible to know with any certainty what would have happened to the students if they had not participated in the vocational programme since we do not have a comparison group, he continues. Certain improvements would most likely have taken place also without the vocational programme, but the approximately 70 per cent of the students in the vocational programme who had completed the programme increased their income by more than those who did, for example, start the programme without completing it.

Students in vocational programmes start working more quickly

The authors of the report have also compared students who have taken a vocational programme to students who have participated in a university education in the same subject area. The authors find that the students in the vocational programme were older, had lower grades from comprehensive school and came from homes with less study skills. Students in vocational programmes had more labour market experience before starting the programme. When the authors compare two groups with the same background characteristics, they find that students in vocational programmes became employed more quickly than university students. About five years after the programme, the differences had disappeared, however, and the level of employment was the same in both groups. Students in vocational programmes

did initially have higher annual incomes, but the university students did earn about SEK 15 000 more per year at the end of the follow-up period.

– Part of the explanation for why the university students took more time before they started to work might be because they chose to continue their studies after obtaining their BA, according to Patrik Lind, the second author of the report.

Background and data

Vocational programmes at the post-secondary school level have existed since 1996, first named Post-secondary Vocational Education and Training (PSV) and since 2009 under the name Higher Vocational Education. The programmes are shorter and less theoretically oriented than university educations, they are to be offered within areas where there is a lack of labour and employers are expected to be participants. The majority of the courses are two-year courses and they are organized by private firms and municipalities. These courses are most common within accounting, administration and sales. In the autumn of 2014, 18 900 places were available.

The authors of the report analyse labour market outcomes and the degree of completed courses for 40 297 students in Higher Vocational Education and Post-secondary Vocational Education and Training using register data from Statistics Sweden and the Swedish National Agency for Higher Vocational Education. The students who are included in the analysis were admitted in 2006 at the earliest to programmes that were planned to be completed in 2010 at the latest.