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Managing a vocational institution happens on many levels

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There are very different types of vocational colleges in Finland. Some are small, others very large, and they operate in many different locations. The work of a principal in a small educational institution may be very different from the one in a large college. In a vocational institution, it is common to divide the management responsibility. The principal is the general director, who runs the operations of the entire institution and works as the personal supervisor for directors, vice-principals, and managers of education. The everyday management of education is usually carried out by managers.

Teachers are the experts in their work, and it is important for them to manage their own work as much as possible. Shared leadership and independent teamwork are emphasised in Finland.

Strategic management

The work of a vocational institution is defined by many norms coming from outside the education itself: laws, statutes, method of financing, instructions, as well as the regional and municipal strategies. However, the vocational institution may draw up their own mission, vision, values, strategic goals and focus areas, in collaboration with the management, staff, and interest groups.

“Pedagogical management also affects the working culture of the educational institution.

Pedagogical management

Pedagogical management is the management of teaching and learning. Its focus areas are curriculum development, the competences of the teaching staff and their development, resources for teaching and learning, as well as the support and promotion of the students' learning. Pedagogical management also affects the working culture of the educational institution.

Pedagogical management is interactive. The people working in the educational institution form a community of learners, where the principal and other managers are learners alongside the other members. It is important for the management and the teaching staff to have regular conversations about pedagogical issues, in order to increase common understanding, to create operation models, and to come up with solutions.

Management of change and quality assurance

The fast pace of changes and educational reforms have made management of change, future planning, and networking essential parts of management in vocational education.

The management of vocational education also includes quality control, evaluation, and development. The education providers are expected to have a working quality control system, which also includes the education providers evaluating the qualifications they provide, their education and other activities, as well as their quality and impact.

Interest group and network collaboration

Wide-ranging collaboration requires the managers of vocational education to have strong competences in networking, collaboration, and interest group work.

Educational institutions collaborate with the working life, employment authorities, other vocational institutions and upper secondary schools, higher education and comprehensive education providers, as well as with the third sector. Collaboration with the student health care and welfare services, and often with the students' guardians, is also close.

