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# Initial Vocational Training in Sweden

## 1. Introduction

### Overview

The public system of initial vocational training (IVT):

- There is no dual system of training in Sweden. IVT provision and regulation is virtually entirely public and IVT mainly takes place in full-time schools. Therefore, Sweden is a representative of statist vocational training regimes. As Andersson (2000: 17) puts it, 'in principle, all IVT in Sweden is provided within the upper secondary school system and is more than 99 per cent financed with public money'.
- We also have to note that the usual differentiation between IVT and continuing vocational training (CVT) is 'is difficult to apply in the Swedish context' (CEDEFOP 2009: 23) because the Swedish education system is highly developed. IVT as well as CVT are highly integrated in the public education system.
- 98 per cent of compulsory school leavers attend three-year upper-secondary schools (CEDEFOP 2009: 23). The vocational-oriented program provides a broad basic education within a vocational field and the foundation for further studies. At least 15 weeks of work-based training (*Arbetsplatsförlagd utbildning*, APU) has to be offered during the three-years period of the upper secondary school (CEDEFOP 2009: 23). The main subjects as Swedish, English and mathematics are common for all students (Swedish Ministry of

Education and Science 1997: 240). About 85 per cent of the IVT programs are school-based. The educational providers of the 13 vocational-oriented programs (municipalities, independent schools etc) have the responsibility to find workplace training opportunities and supervising students (CEDEFOP 2009: 25).

- Apprenticeships outside the upper secondary school are not as common as in most other European countries. Only about 1,000 people each year get such a certificate. The staff training is paid by the employer (Andersson 2000: 22).
- The municipalities gained a significant degree of freedom to organize initial vocational education at the upper secondary level within a framework established by parliament and government. Local vocational councils, comprising representatives of employers, employees, the municipality, the school and students, influence the organization of workplace education (Winterton 2007: 286). However, the issue of setting the wages for apprentices is in the responsibility of the social partners (European Committee of Social Rights 2008: 19).

The role of collective labor agreements (CLAs) in IVT:

- There are currently no CLAs regulating IVT in Sweden. However, this was not always the case.
  - In 1918, the system for vocational education and training was established in a comprehensive way. Different schools (agriculture, technical, commercial, etc.) got supervised and financially supported by the state (Nilsson 2008: 85). By the end of the 1930s, the social partners that initially opposed apprenticeship system came to an agreement and started their commitment to engage in IVT. However, in general, trade unions were skeptical and opposed apprenticeship because they were in fear of wage pressure and that training is too firm-specific with the consequence that workers are locked in the firms (Nilsson 2008: 85).
  - Nevertheless, the enterprises got a greater role in financing training and the social partners took the responsibility for the contents of the education and training. Attempts for a legal regulation all failed. Consequently, enterprise training became regulated in CLAs, but it was broadly considered as an unsatisfactory solution. At firm and sectoral level employers and trade unions did not agree on wages, working hours, and the cost-sharing between companies. Therefore, the CLA-regulated apprenticeship declined in importance in the 1950s (Nilsson 2008: 85). Following Nilsson (2008: 86), '[p]artly as a consequence of the relative failure of an apprenticeship system that was regulated in collective agreements, the State [sic!] took greater responsibility for vocational education and training from the mid-1950s'.

- In 1971 the current system was established and the vocational and theoretical programs got integrated in the upper secondary school. It was a 'drastic change and imposed a large degree of uniformity in the Swedish education system' (Nilsson 2008: 87).

### **Levels of bargaining**

Currently, there is no bargaining on IVT.

### **Actors**

Currently, there is no bargaining on IVT.

### **Critical junctures**

Definition: Critical junctures are time periods or years when important decisions on the development of the collectively negotiated IVT scheme were made.

- 1971 can be considered as a critical juncture as it marks the introduction of the current apprenticeship system under the upper secondary schools.

## **2. Important Collective Agreements (Examples)**

Currently, there is no bargaining on IVT.

## **3. Important sectors**

Currently, there is no bargaining on IVT.

## **4. Structure, Organization, and Mode of Administration**

Currently, there is no bargaining on IVT.

## **5. Role of the State: Financial Support, Legislation, and Extension Procedures**

Currently, there is no bargaining on IVT.

## **6. Financial Structure of the Collectively Negotiated Schemes**

Currently, there is no bargaining on IVT.

## **7. Benefits and Measures of the Collectively Negotiated Schemes**

Currently, there is no bargaining on IVT.

## **8. Coverage Rates of the Collectively Negotiated Schemes**

Currently, there is no bargaining on IVT.

## **9. The Politics Around the Collectively Negotiated Schemes**

### **Linkages to Public Reform Policies**

Currently, there is no bargaining on IVT.

### **Linkage to Wage Agreements and Wage Policy (e.g. Wage Restraint, Tripartite Agreements) and Other Agreements**

Currently, there is no bargaining on IVT.

## **10. Recent Developments and Other Interesting Information**

- In 2011, a new upper secondary school system will be introduced which will also include a new apprenticeship program (CEDEFOP 2009: 27). In these programs work-based training will constitute at least 50 per cent of the training and it is possible for apprentices to earn a wage. The graduates of this school will receive a vocational upper secondary diploma in the end. To cover costs of the employment of the apprentices, employers that hire apprentices will get approximately SEK 25,000 per apprentice per year. Over the first three years the government tends to spend SEK 400 million to cover the costs to employ apprentices and SEK 100 million for training apprentice supervisors. This funding should cover costs for 18,000 apprentices over the first three years (CEDEFOP 2009: 28). These plans can be seen as a new attempt to create links between vocational schools and enterprises. The students would spend half of their working time in an enterprise and the

other half in a vocational school. Nevertheless, the schools will have the responsibility for the entire program (Nilsson 2008: 89).

- Following Nilsson (2008: 90), 'consequently, the recent reappearance of elements in the Swedish system, such as private providers and an apprenticeship program, is not a return to a previous model but a reaction to uncertainty in future labour demands'.

## 11. Contacted Experts

No expert was contacted as secondary literature provides clear evidences.

## 12. List of Abbreviations

- APU: *Arbetsplatsförlagd utbildning* (work-based training)
- CEDEFOP: European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training
- CLA: collective labor agreement
- CVT: continuing vocational training
- IVT: initial vocational training
- SEK: *svensk krona* (Swedish krona, currency of Sweden)

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