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# A Case Study of Permeability between VET and Tertiary Education

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## European Integration in education - a vision to harmonise

### Bologna process in Higher Education:

- ▶ promoted collaboration and harmonisation in HE across Europe and beyond: developed ECTS; promoted Mobility; Joint degrees;

### Copenhagen Process in VET:

- ▶ developed ECVET; EQAVET; mobility

Both have focused on harmonisation within sector, but each having separate paths



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## The EQF

- ▶ 2008 Saw the establishment of the European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning by the European Commission.
- ▶ Levels 1-8 of the EQF cover qualification levels for both HE and VET.
- ▶ Even if HE and VET have different histories and traditions, they share the same Qualifications Framework



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## Position paper on VET after 2020 by European Ass. Of VET providers

In view of uncertainty as the current certainty, highlight:

- ▶ Alignment of policy at European level with VET provision;
- ▶ FFFF - Fit For Future Flexibility;
- ▶ Hybrid integration professional education (HIPE)
  - Integration between HE and VET;
  - Flexibility in modes of study;
  - In provision (education and industry);
  - Portfolios rather than qualifications;
  - More personalised pedagogies



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## Permeability with flexible pathways

Due to professionalization of sectors and Career progression aspirations:

- ▶ Initial training may become longer and not necessarily straight progression;
- ▶ Lifelong learning among adult workers for career progression or career change.

Many learners may not only want to move up the Qualifications Framework but also shift from HE to VET or vice versa.



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# The Case or Early Childhood Education

## Different forms of Education Provision

VET - starts at levels 3 and 4. Highest level is Level 5 OF 120 credits;

HE - offers a B.A(Hons) ecec

### Employment implications:

VET qualifications: LSE I and LSE II

HE graduates: LSE III

**Career progression requires permeability.**



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## Challenges:

- ▶ HE and VET providers working separately
- ▶ Policy promoting professionalization of the early years practitioners;
- ▶ Career progression ambitions;
- ▶ Small countries cannot afford duplication of training provision;
- ▶ Need to share vision and streamline pedagogical approaches in the sector;



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## The Process

- ▶ Cannot be a simple credit counting exercise;
- ▶ Had to achieve the same learning outcomes but respect the different strengths of VET and HE and have students following different training paths and different learning emphasis.
- ▶ Making permeability as smooth as possible
- ▶ Quality of graduates is ensured.





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## Approach - communication based on Mutual trust

- ▶ Based on a process of regular meetings;
- ▶ Openness on both sides;
- ▶ Went through a process of mapping:
  - Started by sharing the two training programmes;
  - Identified areas of agreement;
  - Identified gaps;
  - Discussed significance of gaps - worth streamlining or maintaining difference:
    - E.g. Emergent curriculum - streamlining;
    - E.g. Practice - maintaining differences.



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## Approach - main principle of quality

- ▶ Internal/external conflicts;
- ▶ Process took 2 years (but enabled first VET cohort to join first B.A.(Hons));
- ▶ Required a degree of redesign by VET;
- ▶ Reorganisation of Study unit design in HE;
- ▶ Until it was possible for VET students to join seamlessly HE in the third year and follow the same course;
- ▶ And signed an MOU between VET
- ▶ Shared tools developed, CPD provision



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## This year first cohort of 3<sup>rd</sup> years with students from HE and VET learning together

First experiences:

- ▶ Investment in promoting integration of HE and VET students paid off;
- ▶ Removed to a great degree the labelling of students as VET or HE;
- ▶ We had weak and strong students from both tracks;
- ▶ But identified literacy weakness;
- ▶ And inequalities in course regulations



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## Challenges:

- ▶ Mutual trust is still a bit of a barrier;
- ▶ Need to share IQA processes - share same external examiner/reviewer;



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## Ways forward:

- ▶ Extend openness to discussing strengths and weaknesses of own training provision;
- ▶ Promote further collaboration of trainers to ensure quality for students, for children, and for the sector.