

NORDIC RELAY BRIEF: ATTRACTIVE VOCATIONAL EDUCATION ACCORDING TO THE YOUTH OF THE NORDIC REGION

Five recommendations from young vocational students in the Nordic region on how to attract and retain young people in vocational education.



**Prepared by Think Tank Mandag
Morgen for the Nordic Council of
Ministers.**

This brief is part of the project
'Futureproofing VET in the Nordics',
carried out in collaboration with
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VOCATIONAL EDUCATION OF THE FUTURE IN THE WORDS OF THE YOUTH

"People think that if you like using your hands, then you don't know how to use your head."

– Emil Mathiesen, 21 years old, Fagskolen Oslo & member of the project's Nordic Youth Sounding Board.

Throughout the Nordic countries, vocational education faces significant challenges in attracting and retaining young students. Many of these students perceive their educational paths as less appealing compared to academic routes. This longstanding issue has been particularly difficult to address, especially as climate concerns heighten the urgency for skilled labor. The Danish Labour Market and Employment Council estimates that Denmark will encounter a shortage of 100,000 skilled workers by 2030. Without a sufficient number of electricians, craftsmen, and other skilled professionals, we risk falling short in areas like green energy initiatives and the installation of new wind turbines.

While this debate has prominently featured in political discussions, one group has been notably underrepresented: the young people themselves, who are crucial for the future of vocational education. What measures can we take to encourage more students to opt for vocational training? From their viewpoint, what constitutes an effective learning environment? These are essential questions that only the young individuals themselves can genuinely answer.

This initiative is why the Nordic Council of Ministers partnered with Think Tank Mandag Morgen and the National Center for Vocational Pedagogy at Copenhagen University College to engage young people across the Nordic region. The goal is to gather their insights on how to develop future-proof vocational education. In this report, we present their reflections, insights, and proposed solutions aimed at attracting and retaining more young individuals in vocational training. This document serves as a platform for young voices, emphasizing that the focus should be on their educational choices and future aspirations. We hope these perspectives will enrich the ongoing debate and contribute to the necessary evolution towards creating attractive, sustainable, and green vocational education in the Nordics.

Throughout the Nordic region, young people express common themes: they desire more inclusive communities with their peers, a strong commitment to excelling in their craft, and a need for adequate facilities and equipment that enhance practical skills in their education. Furthermore, they seek recognition and respect, wanting to be treated as adults.

We aim for this brief to help bridge the gap between young people and adult decision-makers, leaders, and educators, responding to the calls from youth for a vocational education that truly reflects their needs and aspirations.

Happy reading!



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TABLE OF CONTENTS

SUMMARY	5
INTRODUCTION	7
★ RECOMMENDATION 1: Break the stigma and promote vocational education!	8
★ RECOMMENDATION 2: More community attracts and motivates us	11
★ RECOMMENDATION 3: Practical experience from the start makes education attractive and meaningful ...	14
★ RECOMMENDATION 4: We want to be seen and spoken to as adults	17
★ RECOMMENDATION 5: We want cooler equipment and facilities.	19

SUMMARY

The ongoing debate about how to make vocational education and training (VET) more appealing to young people in the Nordic countries has persisted for decades. This multifaceted issue involves various political, educational, and industrial perspectives. Moreover, young people are not a monolithic group; their experiences, expectations, and aspirations vary significantly. As such, the recommendations provided here are grounded in widely shared sentiments across the Nordic region. The following recommendations aim to elevate the voices of young VET students in this discussion, strengthen their arguments, and bridge the divide with the adult world. Insights gathered from young Nordic voices have culminated in the five recommendations outlined in this brief.

★ **RECOMMENDATION 1:** **BREAK DOWN STIGMAS AND PROMOTE VOCATIONAL EDUCATION!** **IT IS RECOMMENDED THAT:**

- Efforts should be made to highlight the positive aspects of vocational education – and not just the value it brings to the labor market!
- We need to improve our communication about all the opportunities VET can offer.
- The narrative around VET should be more inclusive regarding gender, identity, and diagnoses – we are missing out on many skilled people!
- Role models should be emphasized in the storytelling about VET. Many of us choose education paths because we look up to someone.

★ **RECOMMENDATION 2:**

MORE COMMUNITY BUILDS ENGAGEMENT AND MOTIVATION! **IT IS RECOMMENDED THAT:**

- Efforts are made to arrange regular social events that bring students from different fields together. These could include anything from sports days to formal dances, allowing students to engage with the non-academic aspects of their education.
- Schools improve communication about the non-academic elements of their programs to help meet young people's expectations of their education.
- Incentives are created to integrate group work and collaborative projects in the teaching process to strengthen students' social bonds.

★ **RECOMMENDATION 3:**

HANDS-ON EXPERIENCE FROM THE START MAKES EDUCATION ATTRACTIVE AND MEANINGFUL! IT IS RECOMMENDED THAT:

- Clear communication about the specific educational pathways to balance future students' expectations is prioritized.
- Efforts are made to introduce more practical subjects early on in vocational programs.
- Schools are given the opportunity to hire more teachers with practical experience in the fields they teach.

★ **RECOMMENDATION 4:**

WE WANT TO BE SEEN AND SPOKEN TO AS ADULTS!
IT IS RECOMMENDED THAT:

- Investment is made in more pedagogical courses so that teachers are better equipped to handle and teach different age groups.
- An educational environment is created where students are not afraid to make mistakes, and their ideas are taken seriously.
- There is a stronger focus on treating students as independent adults.

★ **RECOMMENDATION 5:**

WE WANT BETTER COOLER EQUIPMENT AND FACILITIES!
IT IS RECOMMENDED THAT:

- Investment is made in modern, up-to-date equipment that reflects the latest technology and practices in the various fields.
- Schools ensure that all students, including those with disabilities, have access to suitable and functional equipment.
- Learning environments are supported with appropriate furniture and facilities tailored to each program, providing students with the best conditions to learn and thrive.



INTRODUCTION

The world is experiencing constant and rapid change, presenting challenges like climate change, industrial transformation, and the well-being of young people that require innovative solutions. Vocational education and training (VET) plays a vital role in addressing these challenges by equipping young people with the practical skills necessary for facilitating the green transition, achieving new industrial policy goals, and creating opportunities for today's youth and future generations in the Nordic region.

However, despite the evident importance of these skills, VET faces significant hurdles, including negative perceptions, a lack of attractiveness, and retention issues. Across the Nordic region, vocational education struggles to attract and retain students. To effectively tackle the challenges of the future, we must make VET more appealing. Achieving this, however, is easier said than done. For decades, experts, organizations, and politicians have sought answers to this pressing question.

What distinguishes this project from the multitude of analyses and recommendations already available in this field?

The Nordic Council of Ministers, in collaboration with the think tank Mandag Morgen, has aimed to include a crucial perspective in the debate: the voices of young vocational students in the Nordic region. [The project "Futureproofing VET in the Nordics"](#) is designed to amplify the input of young VET students in discussions surrounding educational improvement. The recommendations are based on the preferences and insights of young people, reflecting their desires for how VET can be enhanced. Our mission has been to validate the arguments of young Nordic VET students and create a bridge to the adult world.

The project has culminated in five key recommendations. Together with the young participants in this initiative, we hope these recommendations will inspire politicians, educational institutions, and other relevant stakeholders to take meaningful action to improve the conditions for those pursuing VET. By listening to those most invested in the future of VET, we can work toward a stronger and more inclusive future for vocational education and young people across the Nordics.

How Were the Recommendations Developed?

The catalog of recommendations directly reflects the insights and quotes from young people across the Nordic region, gathered during workshops known as [Nordic Youth Relays](#). These workshops were held in collaboration with local schools and organizations, engaging approximately 100 students from Denmark, Norway, Finland, and Iceland. It's essential to note that these recommendations do not encompass the views of all young people. However, the recruitment process considered various factors, including gender, age, nationality, and disability, to ensure diverse representation.

To keep the voices of young people central throughout the project, we established a '[Nordic Youth Sounding Board](#)' (NYSB), a youth panel composed of 10 young VET students from Denmark, Finland, the Faroe Islands, Iceland, Norway, and Sweden. This panel continuously elaborated on and refined the points gathered from activities across the Nordics from November 2023 to May 2024.



★ RECOMMENDATION 1:

BREAK THE STIGMA AND PROMOTE VOCATIONAL EDUCATION!



"People think that if you like using your hands, then you don't know how to use your head."

– Emil Mathiesen, Vocational School in Oslo & NYSB member



"We talk so much about high school and academic education. But without us, there's nothing. We also need to make it clear that without vocational education, society simply wouldn't function!"

– Eliisa Juntunen, vocational student in Helsinki & NYSB member.

A fresh narrative surrounding vocational education must incorporate several critical elements. Firstly, rather than concentrating solely on the labor market's demand for specific skills, there should be a strong emphasis on the vital role these abilities play in the overall functioning of society. Furthermore, it is crucial to showcase the numerous opportunities that vocational education can provide; a vocational qualification can act as a gateway to a diverse range of career paths. As a Norwegian student points out, due to the numerous opportunities for further education, you can change career paths multiple times throughout your working life: *"People need to know that you don't have to be an electrician for the rest of your life."*

NYSB Expert Column

Emil Mathiesen

Fagskolen Oslo & NYSB member

Emil is particularly concerned with the stigmas he perceives to be associated with vocational education. Having initially enrolled in an academic program, he ultimately decided to pursue stage technology at Fagskolen Oslo.



“Many people look down on those who have chosen a vocational education. There is an idea that academics are worth more. We need to highlight and broadly address these stigmas and promote vocational education. Instead, let’s talk about the many exciting opportunities that vocational training opens up – both in the job market and for further education. You don’t have to do the same thing your entire life, even though we’re told this as early as kindergarten. And it’s not solely the role of politicians to highlight these opportunities. It’s also the responsibility of the education system to share this narrative.”



“I am the only girl in my class. And I am the first woman to be hired at my workplace. I think that says it all.”

– Eva Jóhannsdóttir, studying to become a plumber at Tækniskólinn in Iceland and NYSB member.

Young vocational students recognize the importance of creating a more inclusive narrative around vocational education, particularly concerning gender representation. As Eva highlights in the previous quote, an uneven gender balance can be discouraging for individuals of all genders beyond just male. Danish NYSB member and blacksmith apprentice, Julie, explains that the issue has roots in our early education: “People are surprised when I tell them I’m taking a vocational education. This is a challenge that goes beyond just the education system. All the way back in elementary school, we’re told that girls should be smart and boys should be practical. There’s a need to erase the gender roles that dominate the narrative about vocational education.”

“I remember when I had trouble with my first Nintendo console. My uncle fixed it and explained to me how the different parts work, what to be careful with, and how to repair them. So, it’s actually through him that I developed an interest in fixing things!”

– Norwegian vocational student.

One effective way to enhance the narrative surrounding vocational education is by emphasizing the presence of role models. When young vocational students reflect on their reasons for choosing their schools, they often cite family members, such as parents, uncles, cousins, or friends. By highlighting these role models, young individuals can gain a clearer understanding of the diverse skills and career paths that vocational education can offer.

★ **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- Efforts should be made to highlight the positive aspects of vocational education – and not just the value it brings to the labor market!
- We need to improve our communication about all the opportunities VET can offer.
- The narrative around VET should be more inclusive regarding gender, identity, and diagnoses – we are missing out on many skilled people!
- Role models should be emphasized in the storytelling about VET. Many of us choose education paths because we look up to someone.



★ RECOMMENDATION 2:

MORE COMMUNITY ATTRACTS AND MOTIVATES US



"The close contact with my friends makes me want to be here and learn more. If we were just here without talking to anyone, it would be boring."

– *Danish vocational student*

There is widespread consensus that the social dimension is vital in education. Social interactions – ranging from community engagement and social activities to collaborative work in school – significantly impact students' motivation, well-being, and learning. Many students feel these factors strongly enhance the appeal of educational programs. In Denmark and Norway, this social aspect ranks among the most compelling reasons young people choose a specific education pathway.

"A strong community is crucial for me to feel like learning."

– *Norwegian vocational student*

Across the Nordic countries, words like "friends," "community," and "unity" resonate with motivation. Students' commitment to their education is deeply intertwined with the social life they can experience at school. A Danish cosmetology student at NEXT in Nørrebro reveals that her main motivation for attending the school was the friendships and social connections she found there.

"I learn the most when I learn with others. Community is the most important form of support for me to learn something."

– *Finnish vocational student*

A Finnish student from OMNIA in Helsinki explains that his motivation to learn depends on being part of a community with peers he feels closely connected to. He is not alone; across the Nordic countries, group work is shown to boost students' drive to learn. A Norwegian student shares that she gains the most from collaborative work, especially when she has the opportunity to explain concepts to others. Another Norwegian student notes that his learning is most effective when classmates support him in group settings. On the other hand, a poor class environment and lack of community can dampen their motivation to engage in learning.

NYSB Expert Column

Ari Terjason

Vocational student, Faroe Islands

Ari, a student at the vocational school Glasir, explains that a vocational education can absolutely foster social communities:

“At our school, it’s a lot like the high schools. We have four parties a year, a sports day, and several theme days organized by the school. I think it’s great. When we come to school on Monday, we can talk about the party we all went to on Friday. Or we can look forward to a break from regular school days with, for example, a theme day. It helps us make friends across classes. Now, I have a lot of friends who aren’t electricians. And let’s be honest—you might miss a day of classes for a theme day, but you gain so much more in return. I really feel that these activities make school life much better.”



“I had worries about poor social connections and very little community.”

– Danish vocational student

The social aspect is highly valued by young vocational students, yet many feel that their schools fall short of meeting this need. In fact, this concern is often evident in students’ expectations. Particularly in Denmark, several students voice that they were apprehensive about not having the same chances to build friendships with classmates as they see in other youth education programs. Many mention they had internalized the perception that vocational programs (EUD) lack similar opportunities for socializing through activities like introductory events, annual galas, and Friday gatherings. This perception may deter some young people from choosing a vocational education path: “Community means a lot to me. When I started, I didn’t have any friends. And I didn’t expect to make any friends. But now I have.”

Students believe that strong social communities can impact their future opportunities. Swedish NYSB member Oscar Sjokvist elaborates on this point: “The social aspect has a big impact on your life after education. Your classmates will most likely work in the same profession and sector as you. So our social bonds also influence our future networks and job opportunities.”



“We lack a social life at school. I wish we could do what high schools do here at our school. It would be great to meet across classes for Friday socials or be invited to four parties a year, regardless of the program.”

– Danish vocational student

In Denmark and Norway, students often found their concerns about limited opportunities for community building to be validated by their experiences. Finnish students, on the other hand, report a stronger focus on fostering a sense of community. In Finland, student associations play a crucial role in supporting this community, though they can be fragile, relying heavily on the commitment and enthusiasm of individual members. This fragility was evident in the experience of Finnish NYSB member Arabell, who studies multimedia design at OMNIA in Helsinki: *"All the teachers who have been engaged in our association activities have been laid off due to cutbacks. So now, it has really fallen apart."* NYSB member Julie can relate to Arabell's experience because the members of student associations are constantly in and out of school due to internships, making the foundation for social life at her school quite fragile.

A strong social community is essential. It can influence students' choices regarding their education, as well as their learning, motivation, and well-being. Ultimately, it also affects their future opportunities. Therefore, students are calling for more opportunities to create these communities in their educational programs. As NYSB member Julie states, *"We just want something (added: a form of community). Anything is better than nothing!"*

★ **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- Efforts should be made to arrange regular social events that bring students from different fields together. These could include anything from sports days to formal dances, allowing students to engage with the non-academic aspects of their education.
- Schools should improve communication about the non-academic elements of their programs to help meet young people's expectations of their education.
- Incentives should be created to integrate group work and collaborative projects in the teaching process to strengthen students' social bonds.



★ RECOMMENDATION 3:

PRACTICAL EXPERIENCE FROM THE START MAKES STUDIES ATTRACTIVE AND MEANINGFUL

The best thing about a vocational education is that you don't just sit at a school desk. You are practical and do something physical instead of just sitting. I know that many of us have difficulty concentrating. If we only had to sit, we wouldn't learn anything."

– *Danish vocational student*

For Nordic vocational students, practical, hands-on teaching defines their educational experience. When asked to describe what makes a good day at school, students frequently mention words like "practice," "method," and "active learning." This strong link between education and practical experience is a core expectation for them. A Norwegian student, for example, explains that he chose vocational training to achieve a sense of "mastery" over the craft he is passionate about.

"I don't care about all the academic terminology and all that school-related stuff. I just want to learn the practical skills, like network configuration. If I find something interesting, I remember it."

– *Norwegian vocational student*



Students report struggling with concentration and motivation when lessons become overly theoretical. An Icelandic student describes a "wave of demotivation" sweeping over her class whenever they are required to sit through lectures. In contrast, their motivation soars when they can engage directly with their interests and skills. This is particularly true for first-year students, who often expect to apply their practical skills from day one.

In Denmark, this expectation is not met for first-year students during the foundational program, which includes language subjects and vocational theory. A Danish cosmetology student at NEXT expresses her unmet expectations: "Okay, I'm a bit of a hater. But I really think that Grundforløb 1 [first part of a Danish VET] is super boring. There's a lot of school-related stuff that I don't feel I should be doing in a vocational education." Although vocational programs become more hands-on after the foundational year, new students can face early disappointment, which risks leading them to drop out before they experience the sense of "mastery" they seek. NYSB member Julie compares the foundational program to "being back in 10th grade," which can feel discouraging and disconnected from their expectations for practical learning.

NYSB Expert Column

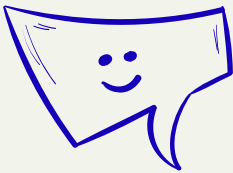
Julie Madsen

Studying to be a blacksmith & Chair of the Vocational School Student Organization, Denmark



Julie Madsen shares her own expectations when she started her vocational education. She began as an industrial technician but later switched to blacksmithing:

“ I had the idea that I would be standing at a lathe from day one. I didn’t, but that was fine for me. However, that’s not the case for everyone. For example, if someone expects to be a carpenter every day, they can become disappointed when the first year includes Danish or math three days a week. I would look at the structure of the foundational program. Maybe there should be more time to consider what you really want. You should have the time to explore your field. It would make sense to spend three days in the workshop and only two days at the school desk—rather than the other way around. The practical aspect should take precedence from day one.”



“We would like to have more teachers who have done what we are training for. We have Rachel, who is a trained cosmetologist. We’re lucky to have her!”

– Danish vocational student

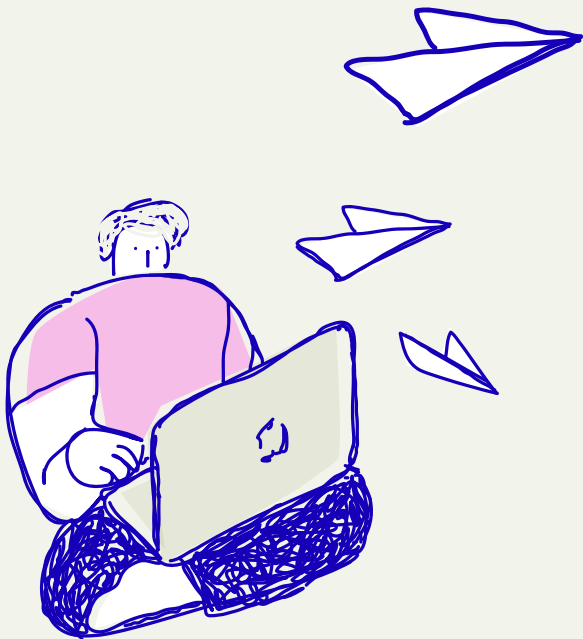
Practical-oriented teaching is not just a preference – it is essential for young students to succeed, stay motivated, and complete their education. NYSB member Arabell from Finland emphasizes that this type of teaching is crucial for facilitating a smooth transition from school to the workforce. A Norwegian student echoes this sentiment, noting that practical-oriented teaching offers valuable insights into their future careers. Thus, it is important that this instruction is delivered by educators who have real-world experience in the field.: “We want teachers who have been through the same process as us and who can relate to the work we will be entering.”

Several students express that they feel more motivated to learn when the practical aspects are linked to teachers they can relate to. An Icelandic student elaborates: “It’s important when I can tell that the teacher has a genuine interest in the subject they are teaching. If that’s not the case, I quickly become demotivated.”

Practical teaching is a top priority for Nordic vocational students – ideally introduced as early as possible in their educational journey. This hands-on approach is the preferred learning method for these students, setting vocational education apart from other educational options. It fosters a sense of mastery, enhances motivation, and plays a significant role in both attracting and retaining students in their vocational programs.

★ **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- Clearly communicate the specific educational pathways to balance future students' expectations.
- Make efforts to implement more practical-oriented subjects early in vocational education programs.
- Create opportunities to hire more teachers with practical experience in the fields they will be teaching.



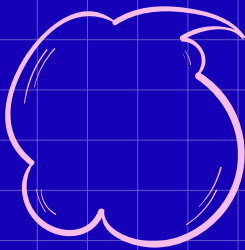
★ RECOMMENDATION 4:

WE WANT TO BE SEEN AND SPOKEN TO AS ADULTS

"Respect and understanding from the teachers are important for me to feel good at school."

– Norwegian vocational student

Some Nordic vocational students feel a lack of trust from their schools and teachers, with experiences varying across the Nordic countries. However, a common thread is that this sense of distrust negatively impacts their motivation to attend school, their learning outcomes, and their overall well-being. Consequently, these students seek to highlight the structures they believe contribute to the issue. It's essential to note that they do not see their teachers as the problem; instead, it is the assumptions about their academic capabilities that do not align with their expectations for a positive school experience.



"I feel that there are some teachers who are not good with younger people. I'm not 9 years old. You don't need to talk to me like I'm a child."

– Danish vocational student

Vocational students desire to be recognized as adults by the educational system that is meant to prepare them for their future roles as apprentices and graduates. They often feel that they are spoken to in a condescending manner within the classroom. A vocational student from NEXT in Copenhagen highlights that they are addressed like children, and their views are dismissed. A Finnish student emphasizes the repercussions of this dynamic, pointing out that it can foster a classroom environment where students feel hesitant to take risks and make mistakes.

A Danish student mentions that her class includes several young individuals with dyslexia and ADHD. She feels that these diagnoses are often misunderstood, leading to a perception that students should be treated like children. This is evident in the way teachers use overly simplistic language, repeatedly emphasize their points, and fail to trust the students' academic capabilities, especially in tasks like writing. Similarly, in Finland, NYSB member Arabell acknowledges this narrative: *"At first, teachers treated me like a primary school student—much younger than I am. It's both frustrating and demotivating not to be met at eye level."* In Norway, several vocational students are calling for respect in their interactions. In Sweden, NYSB member Oscar, who is also the chair of the Unga Rorelsehindrade organization, states that individuals with disabilities must prove their worth even more to be treated as adults.

The Danish NYSB member Julie has a suggestion for what might explain the trend: *"The teachers are really skilled at their craft. But that doesn't mean they have necessarily been trained to teach and manage children and young people."* Additionally, many students feel that their teachers are under pressure, and they can see that this affects the quality of their teaching.

NYSB Expert Column

Arabell Rand

Studying Multimedia Design at OMNIA, Finland



Arabell Rand sætter nogle ord på hendes oplevelser med manglende tillid fra sit uddannelsessystem:

“ I have often experienced that the teachers treat me like a primary school student, that is, years younger than I am. Especially at the beginning of my education. This gives a bad first impression of the program, as my classmates and I see ourselves as adults, independent individuals. It affected my motivation and desire to learn. Instead, teachers should, regardless of their students' age, meet us with trust and speak to us as adults, independent individuals who have made the choice to pursue the education we are in.”



"When the teacher is relaxed, fun, and shows respect, the teaching becomes more motivating for me!"

– Finnish vocational student

Nordic vocational students find their motivation increases when they encounter patience and respect from their teachers. They are more eager to learn when they feel acknowledged and perceive genuine engagement from educators. A Danish student reflects on how a supportive teacher positively impacted her experience *"Last year I had a teacher who was extremely nice. It gave me a lot of motivation, and as a result, I did well in the subject!"* A Norwegian student supports this narrative: *"When the teachers are interested in me as a person and support me, I learn best!"*

Patience and respect from teachers not only enhance students' learning experiences but also significantly contribute to their overall well-being. A Norwegian student mentions: *"Respect and understanding from the teachers are important for us to feel good at school."* According to Finnish students, the third most common response to what characterized a good school day was *"When the teachers are kind to the students."*

★ RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Invest in more pedagogical training so that teachers are better equipped to handle and teach different age groups.
- Create a teaching environment where students are not afraid to make mistakes and where their ideas are taken seriously.
- Place greater emphasis on treating students as independent adults.

★ RECOMMENDATION 5:

WE WANT COOLER EQUIPMENT AND FACILITIES



"I started out at high school, but it didn't suit me. Then I found a drone! And then I became motivated to learn more."

– Norwegian vocational student

Norwegian vocational students capture the core of this recommendation with the following statement. The tools they use and the learning environments they inhabit have a profound effect on their motivation and educational outcomes. To attain a sense of mastery in a hands-on discipline, access to quality equipment and suitable facilities is essential.

Using the tools that characterize their future work life provides them with direct insight into what they will do in their future jobs. A Danish hairdressing student explains why good equipment is important: *"I want more gear to play with – because we can't practice at home."* A Norwegian student mentions that good equipment drives his desire to learn: *"When we can play with new and modern technologies that we learn to use properly, I want to learn more!"*

The utilization of various tools sets vocational education apart from other youth education pathways. A Finnish student notes that their growth and advancement in their studies are reflected in their proficiency with the equipment—enhancing one's skills in using these tools directly correlates with becoming more qualified in their chosen field. Consequently, the effective use of equipment acts as a crucial link connecting theoretical knowledge to practical experience.



"It's a general problem in Denmark that the equipment in education is too poor. It's often 30-40 years old! When technologies develop so rapidly, it's hard to feel like your school is 'up to date' when the equipment is so old."

– Julie Madsen, Chair of the Vocational School Student Organization, Denmark & NYSB member

The young vocational students assert that achieving high-quality education and favorable learning outcomes depends on having access to quality equipment. Unfortunately, they frequently encounter issues with the adequacy of the gear provided to them. Many find that their tools are outdated or in poor condition, which leads to a lack of academic stimulation. For instance, a Danish hairdressing student wishes she could experiment more with steam machines, cut wigs, and use conditioner to color strands. Meanwhile, a Norwegian student expresses a desire to have more opportunities to work with cables and network operations: *"For me, it's important that I keep learning. It could be through network operations, how cables and other hardware work – things we can use in the real world."*

In Finland, they do not experience the same problem: “We have a lot of good and expensive equipment. I also hear from other lines that they have cool kitchen equipment, etc. But it depends a lot on which campus you are at. There’s another campus on the other side of the street, and we hear that they have really bad equipment.” Although the Finnish students generally had a different experience, they report that it depends on the individual schools.

NYSB Expert Column

Oscar Sjökvist

Chairperson, Federation of Young People with Disabilities & NYSB member, Sweden.



Oscar explains that vocational education excludes a large and capable segment of the population: people with physical disabilities. This exclusion of individuals with physical disabilities is particularly reflected in the equipment that is offered in schools:

“We need to have equipment that is suitable for people with disabilities. Often, the equipment in schools is very old, and it doesn’t take disabilities into account. This is a shame, as many people with disabilities are both able and willing to educate themselves and work in the jobs that vocational education qualifies them for. We are missing out on a lot of capable individuals!”



“The classrooms we are in should reflect the education we are taking. Cosmetologists shouldn’t be sitting in rooms that look like a painter’s workshop.”

• **– Danish cosmetology student**

The young vocational students also desire better classrooms, such as improved chairs, tables, and other items that make their school experience more comfortable: “When we sit for a long time, it’s annoying that half of the chairs are those stools without backs.” Additionally, the classrooms should be designed to reflect the specific fields of study. Ultimately, the Nordic vocational students are also advocating for more facilities at their schools that foster a stronger sense of social community. In this context, an Icelandic student mentions: “It would be great to have more sofa arrangements where we can hang out with our friends.”

Modern equipment, quality facilities, and spaces play a central role in students’ learning and prepare them for the future job market. These elements make students more ready and engaged in learning, while also allowing them to envision their future work lives. Therefore, students call for improved facilities, equipment, and spaces.

★ RECOMMENDATION:

- Invest in modern and updated equipment that reflects the latest technology and practices across various fields.
- Schools should ensure that all students, including those with disabilities, have access to appropriate and functional equipment.
- Learning environments should be supported with quality furniture and facilities suited to each program, providing students with the best conditions for learning and well-being.”