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Study Ability, Special Educational Needs, and Workplace-based Learning in VET

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Context

Finnish VET policy

- Legislation emphasizes students' well-being and functioning
- Reforms highlight personalization and early support
- Cross-sector collaboration (education, social, health) is required

RQ: How can study ability be conceptualized through the ICF framework in the context of vocational education and training?



Data and Methods

- **Data:** 1235 ICF functioning descriptions from the national THL dataset; after inclusion/exclusion focused on learning/participation/well-being in VET, 353 descriptions remained
- **Analysis:** Theory-driven content analysis using the dynamic study ability model (Kunttu, 2005) and Hollenweger's (2011). educational interpretation of ICF as frames

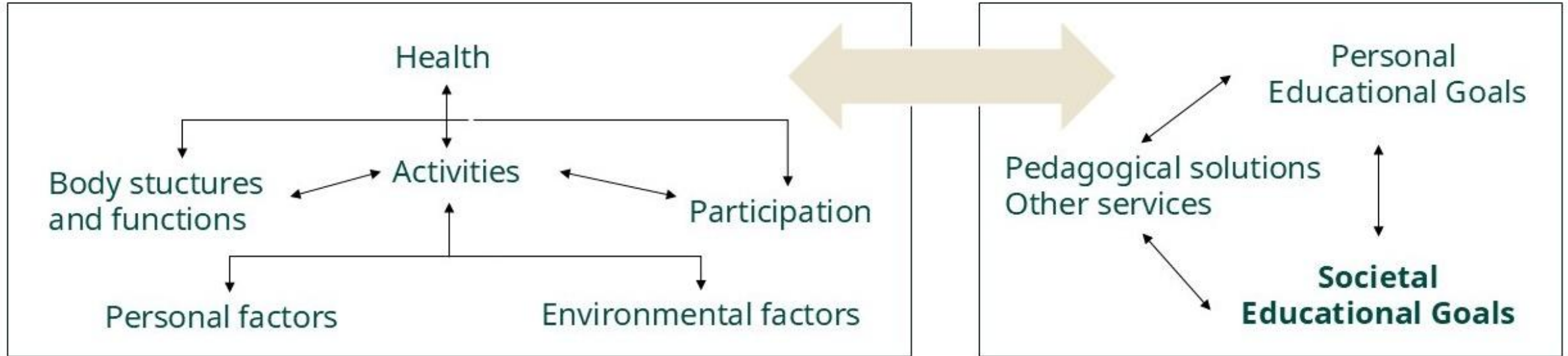


Study Ability- Theoretical Concept

- Study ability is a dynamic interaction of student resources (health, socio-emotional & cognitive skills), study skills, teaching/guidance, and learning environments.
- Motivation and engagement link strongly to persistence and well-being; feedback and assessment connect to personalization and competence demonstration in VET.



ICF as pedagogical tool



- ICF offers a neutral, structured language to describe functioning across activities/participation and environmental factors; it enables a bridge between education and health/social services.
- In our study, we pedagogically reinterpret ICF for VET so that its concepts map onto study ability in educational settings.

Workplace-based learning and HOKS in Finnish VET

- Workplace-based learning is a compulsory, legally defined component of Finnish VET.
- Learning takes place in authentic environments via training or apprenticeship agreements.
- Authentic tasks → cognitive, social, emotional, organizational demands.
- HOKS (personal competence development plan) formalizes individual goals, support needs, teaching arrangements and suitability of learning environments.

Amisbarometri 2024

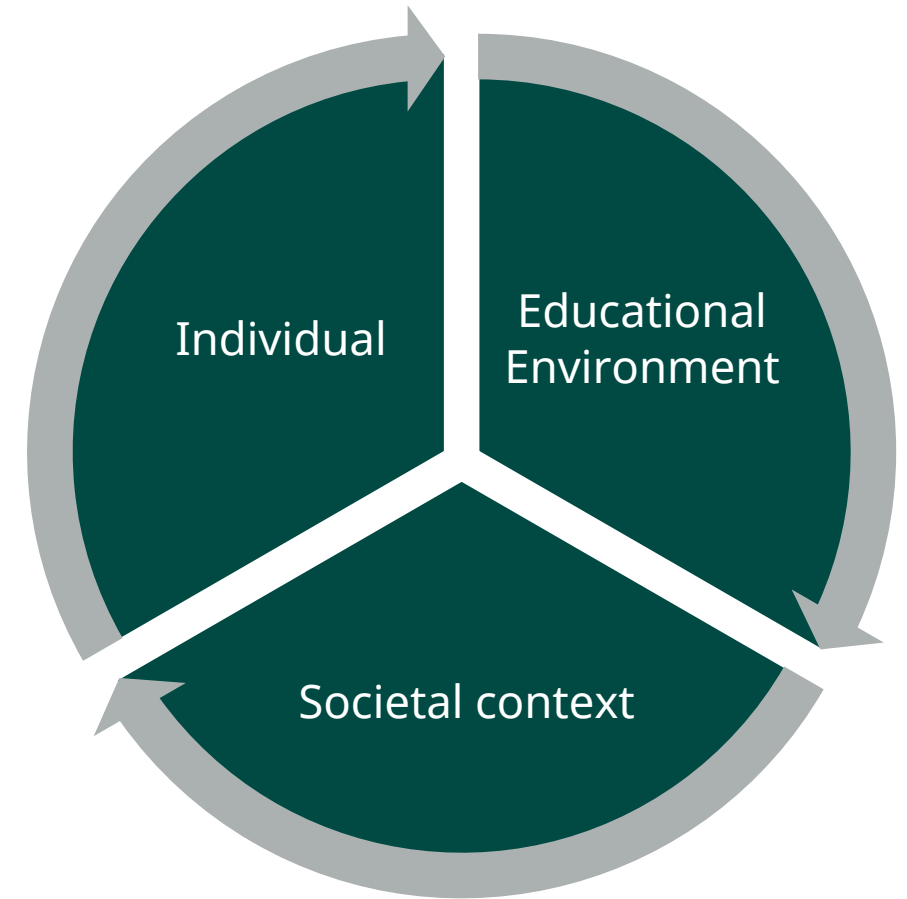
Participation WPL / Disability	No	Yes
No	3646 / 37,2 %*	3703 / 37,8 %*
Yes	1081 / 11,0 %*	1360 / 13,9 %*

$\chi^2(1)=20,824$; $p<0,001$; Cramer´s V = 0,046; $n=9790$; * % of total



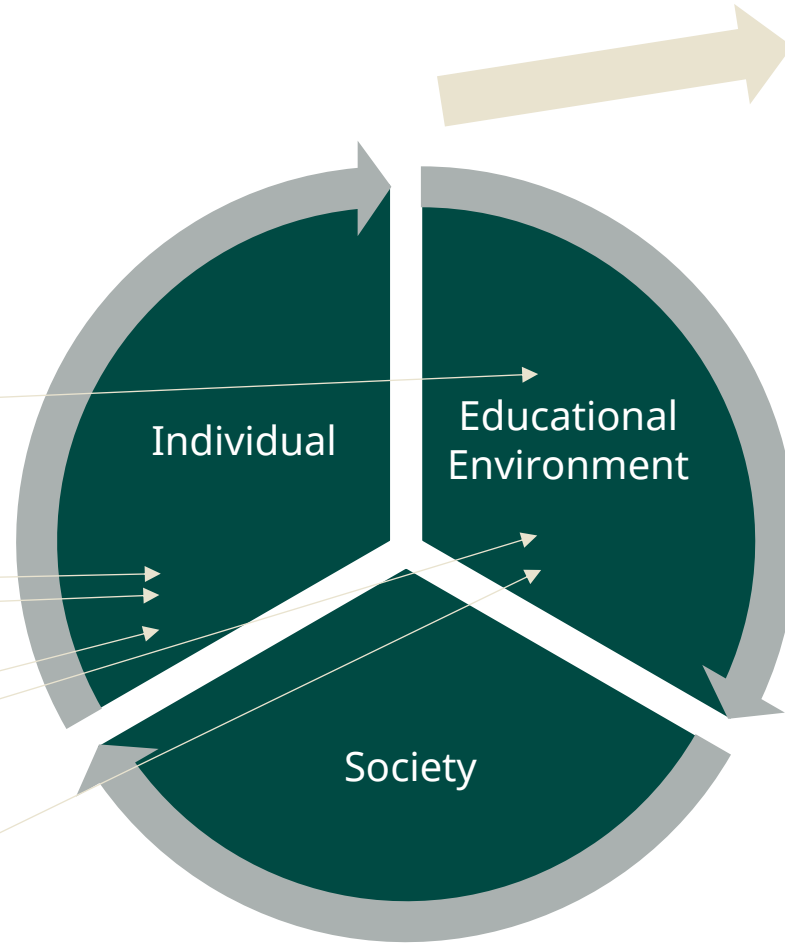
Study Ability in VET through the ICF lens

- **Individual:** learning/cognitive functions, task performance and self-management, personal resources, perceived health.
- **Educational environment:** participation, pedagogical practices & guidance, assessment/feedback, accessibility and psycho-social climate.
- **Societal context:** support services, administration and policy (e.g., funding, regulations) shaping opportunities to participate and progress.



Case: Neo

Neo is 17 years old and studies media in VET. Neo previously studied in a **10-pupil classroom** in comprehensive school. Neo is **cognitively capable** and **learns quickly**. Neo has **strong visual and creative skills**. Neo's **attention is easily distracted**, and most of Neo's **social interaction happens online**.



HOKS

- Lots of personal strengths
- Personal Goals
- Teaching practices
- Guidance
- Learning Environments

Workplace-based Learning

- Targeted Learning Outcomes
- Attention distraction
- Social Skills

Conclusions

- **Conceptual:** Study ability in VET is a multi-layered, context-bound phenomenon across individual, education and society
- **Methodological:** ICF, pedagogically interpreted, provides a systematic, shared language for multidisciplinary collaboration and for identifying support needs.
- **Practical:** For work placements, plan support up-front using the three-context analysis; align goals, environments, and services to strengthen participation and progress



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