

Comparison between Australian and Swiss Vocational Education and Training (VET) systems

The Swiss VET system internationally regarded as the gold standard VET system. It is recognised as the powerhouse of the economy, and is often cited as one of, if not the key reason for Switzerland's economic success. While Australia has a good VET system, for continued improvement there is much we can learn from the Swiss.

Key features of the Australian and Swiss VET systems

Australia

Student demand driven. The system is predicated on the idea that students will be able to find work in their chosen industry once their training is complete, leading to gluts in certain areas and skills shortages in others.

A choice to go into VET is made by students at the end of compulsory schooling. There are VET options available as part of schooling.

The availability and quality of career services for school students varies. VET and apprenticeships are often seen as a second choice pathway.

VET training predominantly covers blue-collar or traditional trade careers. There is also strong uptake in business and retail.

Following VET training, young people can go straight into the workforce, or do further study at a University.

Adults can return to further study at any point in their career.

Government assists in covering the cost of training the apprentice.

Switzerland

Employer or job demand driven. The system is co-designed with employers, ensuring that places are offered to students on the basis of projected employment needs.

Streaming into VET vs academic education occurs early. VET is commenced during schooling, 2-4 years of VET are compulsory schooling.

Students undertake aptitude testing to determine their pathway prior to streaming.

Many Swiss CEOs and Chairmen started their career through the VET system.

VET training covers white-collar (engineering, business, banking) as well as blue-collar (traditional trades and crafts) careers.

Following VET training, young people can go straight into the workforce, or do further study at a college or University of Applied Sciences.

Adults can return to higher education (University of Applied Sciences) at any point.

No government subsidies are paid to employers who take on apprentices, as businesses view it as an investment in the future work pool.

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	Australia	Switzerland
Typical time of entry into VET system	Year 11 or 12, post-school, or as an adult.	Year 9 after aptitude testing.
Typical age of entry into apprenticeship system	15-29 years of age.	15 years of age.
Percentage of cohort that enter VET system	15-20% of school leavers.	65% of school students.
National unemployment rate	3.7% in 2022.	4.2% in 2022.
Youth unemployment rate	8.3% in 2022.	7.4% in 2022.
Global Talent Competitiveness Index	8th ranked in the world.	1st ranked in the world.
Median income (Per year OECD average is USD \$53 416)	\$59 408 USD	\$72 993 USD
Inequality indicators	Top 20% earn 5.6 times more than bottom 20%.	Top 20% earn 5.0 times more than bottom 20%.
Apprenticeship completion rates	56% of individuals complete an apprenticeship.	80% of individuals complete an apprenticeship.
Employer satisfaction with VET system	74% of employers satisfied training met their skills needs.	
Student satisfaction with VET system	89% of qualification completers were satisfied with training.	