

GUIDANCE NOTE 9

Implementing VET staff development

Topic overview

Recent reforms in vocational education and training (VET) teacher and trainer education — especially to ensure better initial pre-service training or continual professional development, more relevant curricula, and dynamic teaching methods for better learning outcomes — represent major challenges to better delivery of VET programmes. The development of effective **policies for the improvement and professionalism of VET provider staff** is highlighted in the Shanghai Consensus 2012 as essential in efforts to expand access to and improve the quality of VET systems in general (UNESCO, 2012). The Shanghai Consensus strongly advocates the development of policies and frameworks for professionalising VET staff. To this end, the international scientific VET community, in cooperation with the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization International Centre for Technical and Vocational Education and Training (UNESCO-UNEVOC), has drawn up a catalogue establishing major disciplines of VET staff qualifications (Bünning and Zhao, 2006). The variety of settings corresponds to the conditions and traditions of the VET system in these countries.

As VET staff play a significant role as **agents of change** for the next generation, the professionalism of VET decision makers, managers, teachers and trainers as well as of VET staff educators is widely regarded as a crucial issue touching on the effectiveness and quality of any VET system worldwide. Although many variables affect the success of VET programmes, it is the nature of the **interaction between VET teachers and trainers and those being capacitated** that has the greatest impact on the quality of VET graduates to be achieved. However, in many developing countries,

SUMMARY OF KEY ASPECTS

- The Shanghai Consensus strongly advocates the development of policies and frameworks for increasing the professionalism of VET staff.
- The variety of VET staff development settings corresponds to the conditions and traditions of the VET system in these countries.
- The best way to meet demands for flexibility in VET staff development is through a modular structuring of learning units.
- VET staff have to demonstrate sound experience and knowledge in a particular occupational field as well as having a good command of the skills required for doing the typical jobs and tasks in this field.
- VET teachers and trainers working within the VET system need to have a full skill set, including a good technical understanding of the subject area.
- Teaching skills based on appropriate pedagogy, practical work experience and related theoretical knowledge are indispensable for VET staff.
- Efforts to strengthen VET teacher/trainer training should incorporate both the pre- and in-service phases.

VET has a low standing compared to general education and university studies — sometimes to the point of stigmatisation. In other countries, including Austria, Denmark, France, Germany and the Netherlands, the high level of professionalism of VET staff qualification

contributes considerably to the quality and social standing of VET systems.

One of the main objectives of VET staff education is to find new or improved ways to **increase quality in VET systems**. In planning training for VET staff for developing countries, the demands arising from globalisation and modern production must be taken into account, while not neglecting the particular demands rooted in traditional forms of work and production. This wide range of challenges can only be overcome by a very flexible, highly differentiated and cost-effective qualifications framework for VET staff. The 2005 UNESCO-UNEVOC [Hangzhou Declaration](#) on increasing the profile and professionalism of VET staff education, and the formation of an international network to develop and implement standards for a VET master's degree, are milestones in the history of VET staff development. Since the adoption of the Hangzhou Declaration, the qualifications framework for VET staff includes four qualification levels ranging from 4 to 7 (see Figure GN9.1).

VET staff must be acquainted with the content and form of work organisation in the respective country. In addition, neither rural/urban, remote/industrialised or traditional/modern sectors should be neglected or preferred. The best way to meet these demands for flexibility in VET staff training is through a **modular structuring of learning units**. This goes hand in hand with shifting VET curriculum design away from traditional long programmes with learner assessment at the end to VET programmes consisting of

sequences of short modules with assessment at the end of each module — thus providing more flexibility for learners with sequences tailored to their particular requirements.

It is highly recommended that VET staff demonstrate **sound practical experience and knowledge** in a particular occupational field, and have a command of the skills required for doing the typical jobs and tasks in this field. This kind of experience and know-how can only be acquired by practical situations in companies where professional standards for good performance have to be met. From this point of view, teaching skills based on appropriate pedagogy, practical work experience and related theoretical knowledge are indispensable for VET staff.

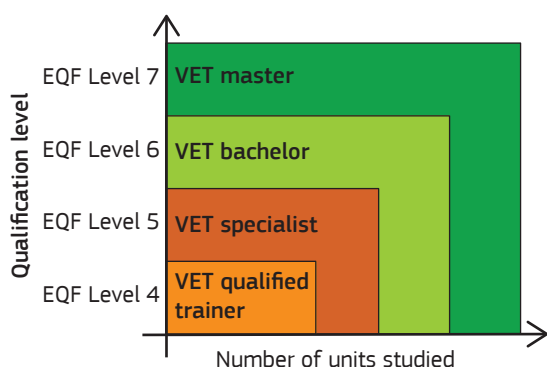
In some developing countries, a few fragmented policy and strategy documents already exist which, directly or indirectly, stress the importance of an education system for VET teachers and trainers. Such systems may be implemented as an initial programme and organised as a short-term programme (see Box GN9.1). In their short-term versions, they can usually be very cost-effective and are an efficient tool to promote VET personnel human resource development at regular intervals.

Procedure

Many VET teachers and trainers enter VET providers **without the benefit of a practical work background**, often lacking the opportunity to experience the world of work. Efforts to strengthen VET staff education must therefore adopt a dual focus, incorporating both the academic/theoretical part as well as the practical work-based part. Consequently, all VET staff working within the VET system need to have a full skill set, including a good understanding of vocational and related academic subject areas. They need to be skilled in pedagogical methods, industrial experience, and deal with the necessary local and foreign language and entrepreneurial skills.

To ensure that VET staff education programmes are relevant to industry needs, VET staff should be provided with **practical experience** according to specific country requirements. Developing linkages with the workplaces during initial pre-service VET staff

FIGURE GN9.1 Qualification levels of VET staff



BOX GN9.1 Reform of VET teacher and trainer education in Serbia

In recent years, the Serbian Ministry of Education — in close collaboration with the European Union's Community Assistance for Reconstruction, Development and Stabilisation (CARDS) project and other bilateral partners — has undertaken a reform of the country's VET teacher education programme. Traditionally, preparation for future VET teachers and trainers to serve in the country's more than 300 VET providers has been a heavy university-based technical and pedagogical programme with little or no non-academic work experience. The reforms included introducing a new system of in-service teacher education, which was only offered sporadically up to 2000. In 2006 and 2007, a comprehensive in-service VET teacher and trainer education programme was set up in three economic sectors (wood processing, catering and tourism, and information technology) and eight occupationally specific VET programmes consisting of general modules on vocational pedagogy and didactics, sector-specific training for VET trainers (instructors) and organised internships for VET teachers and trainers in those three economic sectors.

The reforms focused on new and better VET teaching methods, greater attention to innovation, fundraising, improving communications and relations between VET providers and their clients (e.g. local businesses, local municipalities, labour market offices and employment services, parents, students and other regional stakeholders). Job placement, job guidance (including tracer studies), skills and training needs analysis and regional labour market analysis were also part of the reform approach.

More than 1 000 VET teachers and trainers out of a total of about 15 000 in Serbia have been trained under this programme, based on a package of 27 in-service training days. These were jointly developed and carried out by more than 40 master trainers who now serve as a pool of experienced VET teacher/trainer educators and work very closely with the ministry and the national VET centre.

Source: Ministry of Education, Republic of Serbia, 2010.

preparation programmes is needed. It is recommended realising the importance of workplace experience for all VET staff by suggesting an Industrial attachment programme while working as a VET staff. Traditional monolithic VET programmes lasting from two to four years are proving increasingly inadequate for the needs of today's labour market.

Hence, there are various reasons for **modularisation within the VET sector**. Modules may be either independent or part of a wider VET programme or learning environment that leads to vocational qualification. VET staff have to be prepared to apply methods of modularisation in their professional work as well as to use blended training methods to deliver training: computer-based training, virtual reality, books and study materials, etc. To support the relevant partner organisations at the macro, meso and micro levels to build capacity of professional VET staff, a systemic multi-level approach is suggested. Implementation of a national system for professional VET staff supported by the European Union can include the following steps.

STEP 1: Build capacity of professional VET staff in partner organisations

VET staff have a central role in strengthening VET system capacities to undertake successful VET reforms. The **role of VET staff in VET reforms and their developing professionalism** are issues that require more research and careful policy attention. This applies to both initial pre-service VET staff education, and continuing in-service VET staff development as well as capacity-building programmes — all of which are needed to support and implement successful VET reforms. There are essentially four areas of responsibility for which VET staff have to prepare themselves during their academic studies:

- **occupations** and corresponding subjects of the vocational domain;
- analysis, design and organisation of **professional work processes**;
- the **subject of professional work**;
- analysis, design and evaluation of **training processes**.

STEP 2: Demonstrate the development of professional VET staff modules

Support the development and/or improvement of VET staff education modules aligned to the respective national qualifications framework (NQF), according to needs of the partner organisation and based on consultations with the private sector. A **competence framework for VET staff** is a generic description of the skills, knowledge and wider competences VET staff have to possess to promote improvement in the provision of VET programmes. This sub-framework of the NQF can help policymakers identify the important aspects of reform and content needed for the initial and continuing education of VET staff:

- cooperation with **selected industry associations** in regard to VET staff development needs in selected economic sectors;
- demonstration of developed VET staff education modules in a number of **pilot projects**;
- execution of **training and assessment** sessions for VET staff education modules as well as lessons on evaluation tools;
- development of mechanisms to **attract girls and women** to become VET teachers and trainers as well as in-company instructors.

STEP 3: Implement a new VET master programme

The identification of a number of **academic VET disciplines** is the first step towards increasing the education and professionalism of VET staff. However, this holds only if these academic VET disciplines can successfully be filled with substantial content. In this regard, quite a number of university institutes and VET researchers have presented excellent examples of international best practice and pioneering studies.

A 10-year joint project between the Chinese Tongji University, the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) and several German universities including the Institut für Technik und Bildung (ITB) of the University of Bremen have undertaken first

steps towards establishing a modern **VET master's programme for the academic VET disciplines** and occupational fields of electrical engineering and information technology, mechanical engineering, construction, and business and administration. In addition to the regular VET staff programmes, a selected VET education provider (in most cases, a university) annually organises skill-upgrading and knowledge-updating short courses, seminars and workshops at the national and international levels for existing VET staff.

STEP 4: Develop quality assurance processes

The setting of training standards, regulation and quality assurance processes for a VET staff development system is of paramount importance for reliable VET staff development programmes. The quality assurance process can include the following:

- advise on establishing and monitoring a structured **industrial attachment programme** for VET staff;
- support the improvement and, where necessary, development of methods for evaluation, results-based monitoring and **quality management** of VET staff development programmes;
- support the development and coordination of existing mechanisms for **tracing VET staff**;
- support the **development of career pathways** for VET staff.

STEP 5: Monitor and evaluate the impact of pilot projects

The value of the development approach proposed in the previous steps depends to some extent on the data and information available. While it can come from many sources, including research, the **systematic development of a knowledge and information base** can be helpful for developing countries to identify weaknesses and strengths of the VET staff education system. Too often, discussions of strategic interventions into VET staff development policy are constrained by a lack of reliable monitoring and

evaluation evidence on the impacts of reform programmes. Therefore, the final step supports establishment of a monitoring and evaluation system as a whole for the VET staff development system to allow more evidence-based decisions at the strategic level.

References and further reading

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Case study: Multiplier Training System of VET staff in Lao PDR

CONTEXT	An urgent need for pedagogic and didactic training for more than 1 000 VET staff members was identified in Lao PDR in 2000. This led to the establishment of a Multiplier Training System (MTS) in response to the shortcomings in VET staff qualifications — a reflection of the fact that, in the late 1990s, no systematic qualification system for VET staff existed. At the time, further training of VET staff was undertaken on an ad hoc basis, leaving the pedagogical knowledge and skills of VET staff at an especially low level. MTS is a well-known model of three-level VET staff training. Experienced VET staff have been trained and prepared as senior multipliers in order to train less experienced VET staff as junior multipliers, who will assist the senior multipliers and subsequently act independently. After being trained and certified as multipliers, these personnel train VET staff employed at VET providers based on the MTS concept. The introduction of MTS was meant to bridge the gap until a future initial pre-service VET staff training system could be realised at the university level. The second objective of MTS was for it to become a recognised permanent in-service system for VET staff. Since its initiation, a total of 1 850 VET teachers and trainers have participated in MTS programmes.
CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES	The MTS concept offers not only content on vocational pedagogical subjects but also a methodical approach on how to transfer content from occupational subjects to learners. Special attention has been given to the multiplier effect, which is based on the assumption that VET staff capacitated by MTS are able to act as multipliers within their work environment (VET providers, enterprises, etc.) and to transfer their knowledge to other less qualified and experienced VET staff. MTS was introduced under the supervision of the Lao PDR Ministry of Education and Sports (MoES) and implemented by an MTS task force of the Vocational Education Development Centre in all public VET providers and, later, other private institutions (e.g. the Lao Handicraft Association). MTS provided essential pedagogical and didactic knowledge to VET staff. Nevertheless, it was not sufficiently integrated into the MoES comprehensive vocational teacher training system and relied heavily on financing from donors due to lack of a budget for an in-service training system for VET staff.
ACTIONS TAKEN	A 2013 evaluation study confirms the high relevance of the MTS and the high level of satisfaction of VET staff with its content and quality of training. The MoES plans to substantially increase the number of VET staff in the VET system annually. In general, MTS programmes only took place when financial support from donors was available. During the evaluation study, a total of 441 persons in 12 VET providers were interviewed. The majority of the interviewees were VET staff; a small number were teachers of general subjects (e.g. math, physics) or managers of VET providers. Interestingly, the number of ‘theory’ teachers (72 %) is significantly higher than the number of ‘practical’ teachers and trainers. It seems the present VET curriculum is focused more on vocational and academic theory than on work processes and practical experience.

LESSONS LEARNED

- MTS was established and introduced as a system for **continuing training of VET staff**. The MTS concept offers not only the content of vocational pedagogical subjects but also a methodical approach on how to transfer content of vocational subjects from VET staff to learners. MTS can be seen as an excellent approach for developing countries where no adequate training opportunities for VET staff exist.
- MTS in its current shape is a useful and highly appropriate tool to provide essential **pedagogic and didactic knowledge to existing VET staff**. It partially served to bridge the gap in providing pedagogical knowledge and skills to VET teachers and trainers until graduates from academic university-based VET teacher and trainer education became available.
- Special attention has been given to the multiplier effect, which is based on the assumption that VET staff trained by MTS become capable of **acting as multipliers within their work environment** (schools, enterprises) and to pass on their knowledge to other less qualified and experienced VET staff. The quality and skills of senior and junior multipliers in general have very positive rating, indicating that the preparation of multipliers was adequate.
- Considering the increasing demand for VET staff and call for new occupational subjects from VET providers, the need to further expand MTS is obvious. However, it is suggested to **link an expanded MTS with the upcoming pre-service training system** at the National University of Laos, based on legally binding decisions of the MoES which also address the issue of MTS financing.

Source: MoES and GIZ, 2013.