

Education International

Draft Policy Statement on Vocational Education and Training¹

Goals and Objectives of Vocational Education and Training

1. Education International affirms that vocational education and training (VET) like all education is a human right. The full participation of citizens in the sustainable social, cultural, political and economic life of their communities is facilitated by the knowledge, understanding and skills acquired through education and training. All individuals should enjoy equal access to VET without discrimination and without ability to pay being a barrier to their participation.
2. Governments and educational authorities, in cooperation with social partners, should ensure that the right to education and training is universally accessible. Employers have a responsibility to ensure that their employees have adequate opportunities and support to pursue VET.
3. EI affirms that education and training is critical to the development of individuals. As stated in the United Nations *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, “ education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms.”
4. VET should provide individuals with both relevant skills and general knowledge that meet the demands of modern workplaces and prepares them as active citizens. As expressed in the UNESCO *Convention on Technical and Vocational Education (1989)* : “Technical and vocational education programmes should meet the technical requirements of the occupational sectors concerned and also provide the general education necessary for the personal and cultural development of the individual and include, inter alia, social, economic and environmental concepts relevant to the occupation concerned.”
5. VET should be available to individuals at all stages of life to support lifelong learning. VET should provide entry level qualifications that prepare people for citizenship, work and should provide pathways to pursue further and higher education. People should be able to access VET throughout their working life in order to enable them to enhance their skills and to progress in their vocations, or to pursue alternative vocational opportunities.
6. VET should also provide enhanced opportunities for those who have not been successful in primary or secondary school and for those who are marginalized or economically disadvantaged. VET can help ameliorate these social disadvantages by ensuring that all individuals have access to entry level qualifications, through literacy and numeracy and

¹ For the purposes of this policy statement, vocational education and training refers to aspects of the educational process that involve, in addition to general education and the study of technologies and related sciences, the acquisition of skills, knowledge and qualifications related to occupations in various sectors. VET learning experiences may occur in a variety of learning contexts, including secondary and tertiary educational institutions and workplaces. In addition, VET encompasses lifelong learning and adult education. Alternative terms used internationally include technical and vocational education and training (TVET), vocational and technical education and training (VTET), technical and vocational education (TVE), vocational and technical education (VTE), and further education and training (FET).

general education programs, and recognition of their prior learning. VET should also provide guidance counselling and other support services to assist individuals to achieve better and more secure jobs and to participate in further and higher education.

Financing and Administration of Vocational Education and Training

7. Education at all levels is devoted to human development and the sustainable progress of society. As such, EI asserts that education — including vocational education and training — is a public good. Educational systems and institutions should be governed by public service principles of public responsibility, transparency, quality, accessibility and equality of opportunity.
8. As a public good, VET is a collective responsibility. Governments have the primary role to play in funding and regulating a comprehensive and high quality vocational education system that is widely accessible.
9. In times of economic difficulties, increased public funding for VET is of key importance. High levels of unemployment, particularly among young people, can lead to increasing demands for VET. However economic recessions can prompt employers, in jurisdictions where they have been expected to support the delivery of VET, to reduce their contributions. It is the responsibility of governments to ensure adequate funding so that all qualified students may have access to VET.
10. Insufficient public funding of VET in many countries has resulted in significantly increased costs for students and workers. Tuition fees and other compulsory charges, where they exist, should preferably be eliminated, but in all cases kept as low as possible so that they do not constitute a barrier to accessing VET. Governments primarily, but employers also, should provide adequate income and social support to individuals participating in VET.
11. The failure of many governments to adequately fund VET has also led to the growth of private and for-profit delivery. EI deplors this trend and asserts that VET should be provided primarily through public institutions. The private and for-profit provision of vocational education is driven mainly by financial and commercial imperatives, rather than educational, skills formation, equity or public policy objectives. In many cases, the profit motive means that resources are diverted from the direct delivery of education to administration and marketing, and cost-reduction is given higher priority than quality improvement. For-profit providers view VET as a commodity and not a social good, and cannot therefore provide the full breadth and depth of education and training needed to meet the range of social, economic and personal development objectives of VET.

Employment and Professional Rights of Vocational Education and Training Teachers

12. Qualified teachers, including instructors and trainers, are fundamental to the provision of quality VET. VET teachers must be appropriately rewarded and recognised for the knowledge, skills and qualifications they have developed in the workplace as well as for their knowledge, skills and qualifications as teachers.

13. The remuneration and employment conditions of VET teachers should be such that it is possible to recruit and retain highly qualified staff in their areas of competence. Salaries should reflect the important contributions VET teachers make to society and compare favourably with salaries paid in other occupations requiring similar or equivalent knowledge, skills and qualifications.
14. VET teachers should be recognized as having the same status as colleagues in all education sectors. In this regard, the *1966 ILO/UNESCO Recommendation Concerning the Status of Teachers* should apply with respect to their career preparation, remuneration, social security, and their rights and responsibilities.
15. VET teachers should enjoy internationally recognized labour and professional rights, including the right to form and join trade unions and to bargain collectively.
16. VET teachers should enjoy stability and security of tenure in the profession. Teachers should be adequately protected against arbitrary action affecting their professional standing or career. The unnecessary use of fixed-term employment contracts and other precarious forms of employment should be discouraged.
17. VET teachers are both professional teachers and professionals within a specific subject/trade/craft/skill. Support should be provided to teachers, during pre-service training and throughout their in-service careers, to pursue professional development opportunities so that they may acquire, update and enhance both their technical skills and knowledge within their area of competence, and their pedagogical and teaching skills.
18. VET teachers should have the opportunity to be actively engaged in research in their field. VET teachers should have access to appropriate facilities and resources, and be provided with a reasonable teaching load in order to pursue these activities. VET teachers should have intellectual property rights over their research and course materials.
19. VET teachers should enjoy professional autonomy, including exercising the primary role over the selection of teaching materials, pedagogical techniques and evaluation methods. Teachers and their organizations should be effectively involved in the development and assessment of new programs, courses, and educational resources.
20. There should be equal employment and career opportunities for VET staff and no discrimination on the grounds of race, ethnicity, sex, sexual orientation or identity, disability, language, religion, political or other opinions, economic status, age or on any other grounds.

21. Although governments have the primary responsibility for the funding and administration of VET, all relevant stakeholders should be actively involved in the design and delivery of VET. There should be an effective and equal partnership between public authorities, institutions and providers, employers' organizations, professional associations, trade unions, VET teachers and staff, and student organizations.
22. At the institutional level, VET staff and students should enjoy effective and meaningful representation on decision-making bodies.
23. Policies and programs designed to assess and enhance the quality of VET should be established with the effective involvement of VET teachers. Such assessments should include a focus on: ratios of teaching and training staff to students and learners; access to quality teaching materials and resources; safety precautions for all learning and training environments; and the adequacy of physical facilities including buildings, libraries, classrooms, workshops, and equipment.

The International Dimension of Vocational Education and Training

24. The sharing of knowledge and skills, and the mobility of students and teachers across borders is important to the development of VET and should be encouraged. However, this international exchange should be fair and should be based on educational values, not commercial imperatives.
25. The cross-border supply of VET should not be regulated by bilateral, regional or international trade agreements like the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS). These commercial agreements have the effect of locking-in and intensifying the pressures of privatization and commercialization while reducing the policy space that educational authorities require in order to regulate VET in the public interest.
26. VET should help individuals acquire portable qualifications that are recognized nationally or internationally, rather than narrow skills developed for specific workplaces. To achieve this, trade unions need to be involved with employers and VET teachers in developing nationally and internationally recognized vocational education qualifications.
27. Governments, in consultation with trade unions, employers and VET teachers, should develop open and transparent procedures for the fair and timely recognition of qualifications of immigrants and refugees.
28. The cross-border supply of vocational education must respect local curricula and cultural and linguistic specificities.
29. Cross-border on-line training programs, when done properly, can be useful supplements to traditional VET practices and provide for greater access for individuals not able to attend classroom setting. However, e-learning should not be a substitute for in-class instruction or direct contact with a teacher. On-line VET should not be used to deskill the work of teachers through the fragmentation and segmentation of tasks.
30. Providers of dubious quality are using cross-border internet-based education and training to cut costs by undermining teachers' working conditions, particularly in off-shore provision. These providers routinely by-pass established quality and audit procedures. Governments, in consultation with VET teachers and other stakeholders, should

cooperate to develop and enforce appropriate regulatory mechanisms to protect students from rogue providers.

31. While globalization has facilitated the international mobility of students and teachers, this has had a devastating impact on many developing countries. The “brain drain” of highly skilled individuals from the developing to the developed world threatens to further hollow out the vocational education systems of poorer countries. Moreover, demographic trends and the emergence of a skills shortage in many developed countries, threatens to exacerbate the brain drain. EI believes that developed countries should consider ways of mitigating the impact of the brain drain, such as offering financial compensation and by assisting in the development of domestic capacity in affected countries.

Summary

32. Vocational education and training is a vital component of any education system. VET, available to students at all stages of life, provides essential skills and equips individuals with the necessary technical expertise and broader competences to be successful in the labour market and to fully participate in civic life. VET may also provide pathways for those to pursue further and higher education opportunities.
33. The importance of VET needs to be more centrally recognised by international agencies, governments and the trade union movement. EI is committed to lobbying and campaigning for the professional and trade union rights of VET teachers and for VET systems that are publicly-funded, of high quality, accessible, and that promote equal opportunities for all.