

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN KOSOVO – RESEARCH OF TRAINING PROGRAMS AND TESTS

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Abstract. Vocational Education Teachers are one of the main important assets for workforce development. This study of the workforce of VET teachers in selected partner countries has two main goals. The aim of this research is to evaluate the level of teacher's development and training programs and test as well, to inform national policymakers about the situation and the needs of the VET teachers and, secondly, to help monitoring the implementation and the change of the teacher professional development. The methodology to be used is based on qualitative research methods, including interviews und surveys.

A major focus of the survey is to enable policy makers to understand what is required to bring along improvements in the Continuing Professional Development (CPD) quality, effectiveness and responsiveness, as well as factors affecting teacher effectiveness in general, such as their motivation and career structure. Professional development for teachers and trainers is widely recognized as a vital tool for the educational reform (Bicaj, 2013). Research shows that the professional development can enduring improve the quality of teaching and learning, enhancing the effectiveness of education and training and providing added value to students, teachers and employers. There is no doubt about the importance of the Continuing Professional Development of VET teachers. Kosovo has for many years developed extensive policies to address this issue, and currently these policies are being implemented.

Keywords: continuing professional development; teacher training; vocational education

Introduction

Professional development for teachers and trainers is widely recognized as a vital tool for the educational reform. Research shows that the professional development can sustainably improve the quality of teaching and learning, enhancing the

effectiveness of education and training and adding value to students, teachers and employers.

There is no doubt on the importance of Continuing Professional Development of VET teachers. Kosovo has for many years developed extensive policies to address this issue and currently policies are being implemented. However, improving the quality and quantity of CPD is not easy. It is essential that policy making, implementation and impact are reviewed and understood by policy makers, so that policy feedback and learning can occur.

Methodology

Data from vocational teachers are used to examine the training development in vocational. The country team agreed to provide support for interview questions and for a draft questionnaire for VET teachers, as well as for access to VET institutions and assistance to national experts conducting interviews, doing the data collection, and the distribution of the results. The content of the questionnaires was validated by stakeholders who helped to identify policy priorities.

The methodology includes:

- A desk review of published documents and research in the current state of CPD of VET teachers and trainers;
- Interviews with 10 stakeholders responsible for the policy, provision and implementation of CPD activities of VET teachers;
- The monitoring VET teachers employed in 71 VET schools or training centres,
- Observation of VET school principals, in some cases, including deputy directors and quality assurance coordinators.

The interviews were conducted with the relevant stakeholders, identified along with the country team. Interviewees included:

- Head of VET Division,
- Officer in the teacher training sector,
- VET expert in Kosovo Pedagogical Institute,
- School principals
- MED Director of Suhareka
- Regional VET Inspector – Ferizaj
- CoC Deputy Directors for Quality Assurance
- Quality Assurance Officer – NQA.

After explanations were given to them about the project and the survey and prior discussions, the questionnaires were distributed in electronic version to the identified interviewees. Altogether 10 interviews were completed.

Objectives of the research

This study of the workforce of VET teachers in selected partner countries has two main goals. Firstly, the survey aims to inform national policymakers

about the situation and needs of the VET teachers and, secondly, to help monitor implementation and change.

A major focus of the survey is to enable policy makers to understand what is required to bring along improvements in the CPD quality, effectiveness and responsiveness, as well as factors affecting teacher effectiveness in general, such as their motivation and career structure.

All participating countries will be able to set the current professional workforce of their teachers in comparison with other countries. Furthermore, the survey will:

1. Strengthen teachers and other stakeholders in the policymaking process;
2. Encourage international cooperation for the development of policies;
3. Support the systematic use of data in policymaking

Literature Review

The Literature Review identified documents dealing with CPD for general teachers and VET teachers in Kosovo. These documents include policy documents, legislation (Laws and Administrative Instructions), various institutional reports, research papers, surveys and analysis reports, reports on various projects, statistical data from EMIS and KAS and what is the most important for our country, the Assessment Report on the Implementation of the Kosovo Education Strategic Plan in 2017. The Literature Review is included in the annex A. The literature review revealed lack of data and research on this topic.

Survey

All 69 public VET schools and 2 private schools were invited to attend. 62 VET schools, out of 71 showed willingness to cooperate. Out of these schools 16 are technical schools, 12 economic schools, 12 mixed vocational schools, 8 art schools, 7 health care schools, 3 agricultural schools and 3 centres of competence. The questionnaires were distributed to selected VET schools in a web-based format. The survey was conducted from May 21st until June 8th, 2018. Out of the total number of 3,149 VET teachers, 828 teachers responded to the questionnaire (26.3% of the total). All questionnaires were completed directly via the online platform. There were 170 survey responses from school principals – representing almost 100% of principals and deputy principals from VET schools in Kosovo, 29% (49) provided complete answers. The response came from 71% of VET schools in Kosovo. Participation by region was equal, for both teachers and principals, with the highest response rate response by teachers of Prizren and lowest by teachers of Peja, while for principals the highest response was in

Table 1. Responding rate of teachers and principals

	Teachers	Principals
	Percent	Percent
Prishtina	12.13%	17.1%
Ferizaj	13.12%	15.8%
Gjilan	13.24%	10.5%
Peja	11.14%	10.5%
Prizren	22.28%	15.8%
Mitrovica	13.0%	15.8%
Gjakova	15.1%	14.5%

Table 2. School principals, teachers or others

	Yes	No	Responses
You, as principal	100.0%	0.0%	42
Vice/deputy principal or assistant principal	52.5%	47.5%	40
Financial manager	47.5%	52.5%	40
Department heads	92.9%	7.1%	42
Teachers	97.5%	2.5%	40
Representative(s) from school	90.2%	9.8%	41
Parents or guardians	92.7%	7.3%	41
Students	95.1%	4.9%	41
Other	59.0%	41.0%	39

1. Teachers and their weaknesses

1.1. Teaching

The survey explores which teaching methods are being used by the teachers.

Table 3. Use different teaching methods

	Never or almost never	Occasionally	Frequently	In all or nearly all lessons	N
I present a summary of recently learned content	3	21	44	32	574
Students work in small groups to come up with a joint solution to a problem or task	1	24	59	16	581

I give different work to the students who have difficulties learning and/or to those who can advance	1	28	54	16	573
I refer to a problem from work to show how knowledge or skills can be applied	1	11	52	36	575
I let students practice similar tasks until I know that every student has understood the subject matter	2	22	47	29	575
I check my students' exercise books or homework	1	14	43	42	583
Students use ICT (information and communication technology) for projects or class work	7	36	39	19	583
I demonstrate practical tasks to students who then carry out the same practical tasks	0	9	46	45	584
Students learn theory and also use that knowledge to solve practical problems within one lesson	1	12	47	40	580
I plan lessons so that when students learn new theory or knowledge, they also apply that theory or knowledge to work-like tasks (work practice).	1	6	45	48	579
I use digital technology to prepare or find instructional material	2	18	45	34	581
I use video in my teaching	16	39	33	12	582

VET teachers in Kosovo say that they are using traditional and modern teaching methods. About one-third of the teachers say they always, or almost always present summaries or demonstrate skills, but this does not mean that they do not use different pedagogy as well. Out of the 579 respondents, 48% of them stated that they plan all, or almost all of the lessons in order for students to learn new theory and apply that knowledge in the work practice or for problem solving (40%). Approximately 40 – 59% of 575 respondents often or always use progressive approaches, such as teamwork and differentiated work for students. It is less common for students to use ICT in classrooms (19% use it often or always), although 34% of teachers said that they use ICT often or always to prepare teaching materials. There is a lack of equipment or know how which explains these figures.

1.2. Relation with the workplace

Table 4. Relation between the learning in the school and at the workplace

	You, as principal	Other members of the school management team	Teachers (not as a part of the school management team)	School (governing board)	Local (municipality, regional, state, national or federal) authority	Total
Appointing or hiring teachers	16.1%	4.8%	4.8%	3.2%	71.0%	62
Dismissing or suspending teachers from employment	16.4%	1.6%	1.6%	8.2%	72.1%	61
Establishing teachers' starting salaries, including setting pay scales	2.1%	0.0%	0.0%	2.1%	95.7%	47
Determining teachers' salary increases	2.2%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	97.8%	46
Deciding on budget allocations within the school	16.4%	9.8%	0.0%	29.5%	44.3%	61
Establishing student disciplinary policies and procedures	26.3%	12.5%	13.8%	25.0%	22.5%	80
Establishing student assessment policies, including assessments	12.9%	17.7%	40.3%	4.8%	24.2%	62
Approving students for admission to the school	25.6%	17.9%	11.5%	15.4%	29.5%	78
Choosing which learning materials are used	6.0%	11.9%	43.3%	10.4%	28.4%	67
Determining course content, including curricula	10.4%	7.5%	19.4%	9.0%	53.7%	67
Deciding which courses are offered	17.9%	8.9%	12.5%	12.5%	48.2%	56

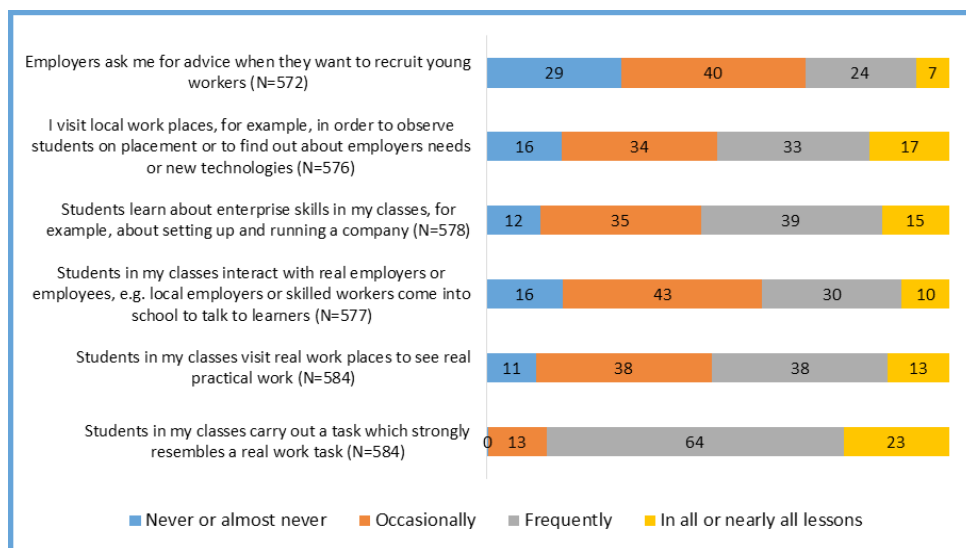


Figure 1. Ratio between learning of the students in the school and at the workplace

The graph shows that most of the teachers are able to simulate often or always classroom work assignments. However, direct interactions with employers are less common. 50% of professional teachers claim that they make regular workplace visits and 51% say their students often visit workplaces. 40% say students interact frequently or always with employers. 31% say employers are often in contact with them regarding recruitment. Many VET teachers and students have little direct interaction with employers and therefore they do not benefit from up-to-date information or social contact with the world of work.

1.3. Work-based learning

VET students, based on the VET core curriculum are required to spend some time at the workplace, following the guidelines of the professional practice guidebook, organized by the school.

From the survey, the answers of 576 respondents are as follows:

- 39% of teachers say that all their VET students have jobs that last at least 10% of their entire program,
- 19% of teachers say that most students have job placements that last less than 10% of their entire program,
- 42% of teachers say that only some of their students have work placements.

These figures suggest that a significant minority of Kosovo vocational students benefit from a significant period of work-based learning.

1.4. Behaviour or motivation of students

The response rate regarding teaching satisfaction with students was one of the highest responses with 56.5% of the 604 teachers, responding that they enjoy their teaching experience. The other highest rated experience stated by 25% of 605 teachers is that most students in the classroom are well motivated in all or almost all of the teaching classes and 63.5% in most of their classes. 8.3% in some of their classes and 3.2% in none of their classes. From the answers presented, it is clear that teachers encounter motivated students and that they are enjoying the learning process with their students.

1.5. Lesson plan

The curriculum is the main teaching guide although significant groups of teachers say that they are also guided by employers' needs and assessment¹⁾.

73% of the 597 respondents answered that teaching and planning are always or almost always guided by the published curriculum. 82% of VET teachers always prepare their own curriculum based on the national curriculum. 36% of teachers say they always experiment with different teaching and learning methods to see what works best, while 52% say they often do so. 43% of the teachers say that their learning is always shaped (48% often) by what they believe employers are looking for. Exams and assessment are on the focus of instruction, for 35% of teachers always and 46% frequently. The results raise concerns about those profiles where the curriculum is not closely linked to labor market needs and suggests that some teachers do not have good knowledge of employer needs or assessment requirements.

1.6. Educational resources

The survey results show that 62% of teachers have frequent or full access to the right materials in almost all lessons, but 38% of students do not have or only occasionally have access to the right resources.

37% of teachers identify a lack of appropriate tools and equipment for learning practical skills and 47% lack of sufficient spending to develop practical skills. About half of VET teachers report insufficient access to reliable and customizable computer equipment, software and internet, sufficient to let them use digital technology in their respective subjects. Only about 20% of students are always or often using the digital learning environment such as Moodle and Sakai.

These data do not reveal how much progress has been made in the last two years. In recent years MEST has invested heavily in developing digital content for pre-university education and digital Matura and training teachers to use digital technology.

1.7. Assessment

In terms of assessment, the survey shows that most VET teachers use different methods to evaluate what students have learned. About 90% of teachers often or always use their assessment tools and use standard tests and observe students'

practice. Teachers are less likely to encourage peer assessment among students (77% often or always) or to use peer assessment to assign different tasks to students (63% often or always). Better use of assessment data seems to be a priority for Kosovar VET teachers.

1.8 Self-efficacy of teachers

The results of the survey on teachers' perceptions of their effectiveness are given in the table 5.

Table 5. Achievements of the outcomes

	Not at all	To some extent	Quite a bit	A lot	N
Get my students to believe they can do well in schoolwork	0	16	22	62	576
Help my students value learning	0	13	22	64	580
Prepare good questions for my students	0	8	14	78	581
Control disruptive behaviour in the classroom	0	8	9	83	580
Motivate students who show low interest in schoolwork	2	6	12	80	584
Help my students understand real work in my vocational branch	0	5	14	81	582
Get students to follow classroom rules	0	5	10	85	585
Help students to develop a commitment to work in my vocational branch	1	10	28	60	580
Provide an alternative explanation if, for example, students are confused	0	7	21	72	579
Give my students the practical skills they will need in the workplace	1	6	19	74	581
Give my students up to date knowledge relevant to my vocational branch	0	10	19	71	579

Almost 80% of teachers highly value their efficiency in the following areas:

- they motivate students to believe they can do better in school and work,
- they are well prepared and prepare good questions for their students which are based on the learning outcomes,
- they can control destructive behaviour in the classroom²⁾,
- they help students understand the real work in their respective professional discipline.

On the other hand, only about 60% of teachers highly value their ability to help students develop professional commitment, succeed and value learning.

Of course, the findings of the survey shall be considered in relation to other evidence, for example concerns raised by employers about the competences of graduates from the VET system²⁾.

1.9. Career and work satisfaction

The survey suggests that most teachers are satisfied and not very happy with their career as a teacher. There is little regret in choosing to become a teacher. More constructively, 46% strongly agree that they continue to improve and learn. 39% strongly believe that they have the opportunity for progress. However, 41% believe that teachers are not valued in Kosovo. The evidence shows that it is wrong to generalize about teachers in Kosovo - we must admit that 40 – 50% of professional teachers are very positive about their careers, ambitious and enthusiastic about their professional development.

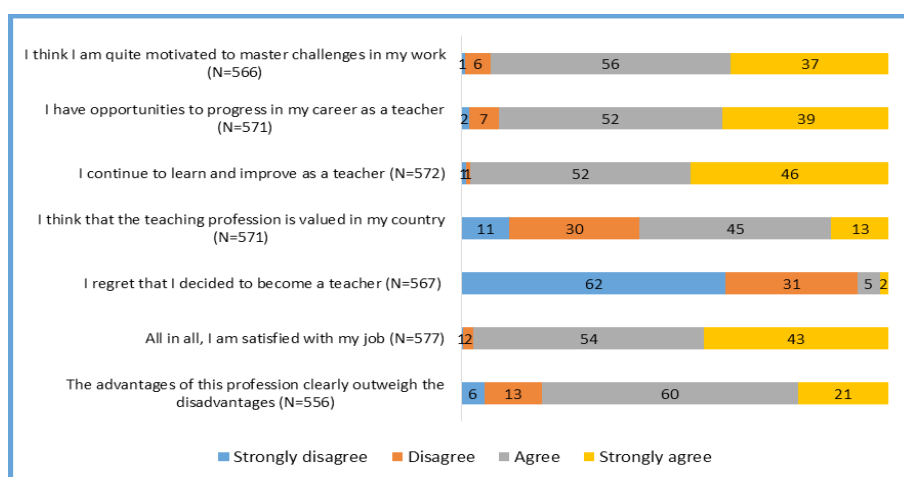


Figure 2. Statement regarding the workplace

Conclusions

VET teachers in Kosovo say they are using traditional and modern teaching methods. Approximately 40 – 59% of teachers often or always use progressive approaches such as teamwork and student differentiation. It is less common for students to use ICT in classrooms (19% often or always) although 34% of teachers say that they use ICT often or always to prepare teaching materials³⁾. Most teachers stated that they are often or always able to simulate classroom work assignments. However, direct interactions with employers are unusual for about 50% of teachers and students, so they may not benefit from an up-to-date understanding or social contact with the world of work. However, about 40% of Kosovar vocational students benefit from a significant low period of work-based learning. The survey

suggests that teachers encounter motivated students and are enjoying the learning process with their students⁴).

The curriculum is the main teaching guide, although significant groups of teachers say that they are also guided by employers' needs and assessment tools. Exams and assessment are always the focus of instruction for 35% of teachers and only often for 46% of teachers. This may be a problem for those profiles where the curriculum is not closely linked to the labour market needs and suggests that some do not have good knowledge of employer needs or assessment requirements⁵).

About 40% of teachers identify issues such as lack of appropriate tools, equipment, and lack of textbooks to teach practical skills. About 50% report lack of sufficient materials to develop practical skills and insufficient access to reliable and adaptable computer equipment, software, and internet in order to enable them to use digital technology in their respective subjects.

Teachers value their efficiency a lot in terms of their lessons and behavioural control, but less in developing professional engagement with students and helping them evaluate learning⁶).

The survey suggests that most teachers are satisfied and not very happy with their career as a teacher. However, 41% believe that teachers are not valued in Kosovo. The evidence shows that it is wrong to generalize about teachers in Kosovo – we must admit that 40 – 50% of professional teachers are very positive about their careers, ambitious and enthusiastic about their professional development⁷).

Recommendations and issues

About 50% of teachers and students have no direct interaction with employers. VET schools should appoint a work-based learning coordinator to support close collaboration with local businesses and other stakeholders⁸).

About 50% of teachers and students lack books, consumables, and equipment (including IT). Identify and prioritize resource needs through consultation with schools and teachers. Make better use of existing resources and plan cost-effective ways to fill gaps. Identify and set a solid budget for VET schools.

While 40 – 50% of vocational teachers are very positive about their careers, ambitious and enthusiastic about their professional development, there is a significant proportion of teachers who are only moderately satisfied⁹).

Ambitious teachers must be empowered to contribute and make changes in teaching, the development of new teaching materials and in linkages with employers, by giving them additional responsibilities, paying incentives, a special status, or involving them in projects.

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