

CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR VOCATIONAL TEACHERS AND PRINCIPALS IN BELARUS 2018

Executive summary

The full report can be found on ETF Open Space at:

https://openspace.etf.europa.eu/sites/default/files/2020-01/Belarus%20CPD%20survey%202018_EN_rev_0.pdf

More information on the survey at:

<https://openspace.etf.europa.eu/wikis/etf-international-survey-vocational-teachers-and-trainers-cpd>

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Introduction

Professional development of vocational teachers and trainers has been identified by the European Training Foundation (ETF) as a key driver for the improvement of vocational education and training (VET) systems across all regions: firstly, because they are the most important input in the VET system and, secondly, teachers and trainers are critical to the successful implementation of other reforms, such as changes in organisations, curriculum, and development of work-based learning, technology and pedagogy. The main objectives of the continuing professional development (CPD) survey 2018 are to:

- inform national policy makers about the condition and needs of vocational teachers and help them to monitor implementation and change through a bottom-up and systemic approach;
- help policy makers to understand what is required to bring about improvements in quality, effectiveness and responsiveness of CPD, at the national level;
- address some of the factors which influence the effectiveness of teachers in more general terms, with regards to their motivation and career structure;
- benchmark the state of the professional teacher workforce against other countries.

This survey is part of an international, comparative survey which also includes Albania, Algeria, Kosovo¹, Moldova, Montenegro, Serbia, Turkey and Tunisia.

Methodology

The methodology included:

- a desk review of documents and research publications about the current state of CPD of VET teachers and instructors;
- individual interviews with seven stakeholders, responsible for the policy, and ensuring implementation of activities related to CPD of VET teachers and instructors, which enhanced the information received based on the analysis of the normative legal documents and research findings;
- a survey of 1,934 VET teachers, working in 105 technical vocational and secondary specialised education institutions;
- a survey of 72 principals of technical vocational and secondary specialised education institutions.

Some 45% of vocational schools participated in the survey, equally representing technical vocational and secondary specialised education institutions, regional affiliation (Minsk and all regions are equally represented), as well as covering all profiles of specialists' training. The survey presents a representative sampling.

Findings

The following summarises the findings of the report. The issues and recommendations were discussed by policy makers and practitioners in a workshop in Minsk². The issues and recommendations highlighted below were judged to be of greatest priority and also most workable.

¹ This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.

² Workshop held on 4 April 2019.

The workforce

Most vocational teachers and instructors in Belarus are qualified as teachers and have Bachelor degrees. The majority have pedagogical training in the subjects they are teaching and teaching practice was included as part of their training. However, more than 30% say that their pedagogical training did not cover all or any of the subjects that they are teaching. Some 76% of teachers are full-time. Only 36% have permanent contracts. Vocational teachers in Belarus are relatively old – only 16% are below 30, and largely female – only 25% are male. Some 53% of specialist VET teachers have no working experience in the industry for which they are preparing recruits.

On average, VET teachers spend 25 hours a week on teaching, which is around 47% of the total number of work hours per week.

Issues	Recommendations
Half of VET teachers have little or no first-hand experience of working in the industry for which they are providing training.	Review qualification requirements for teachers and provide more professional internships for serving teachers.
Teachers are relatively old and mainly female.	Review demographic composition of workforce and evaluate implications.

School governance

School principals have some influence over individual appointments and the curriculum offer but little influence over salaries and the school budget and workforce. They claim to involve teachers and stakeholders in decision-making although 78% say that they make the key decisions on their own. Social partners participate in 82% of school boards. The culture of schools is said to be collaborative by most principals, rather than very collaborative.

Some 86% of principals report that their effectiveness is either greatly or to some extent limited by shortage of budget and resources while at least 50% see their effectiveness constrained by: the lack of 'a career-based teachers' wage system'; the lack of participation and support by parents or guardians and a high workload and level of responsibility for their work. More than half report the lack of the necessary quantity of computers for training and internet access (51%).

Attendance, punctuality and disruptive or discriminatory behaviour are not seen as problematic. Some 93% of principals report job satisfaction in relation to their own role.

Issues	Recommendations
Principals have concerns about school budgeting.	Investigate reasons why the school budget system is judged poorly. Develop and consult on alternative models.
Effectiveness of schools is constrained by a lack of skilled and competent VET teachers and practical instructors.	Investigate skills gaps. Plan changes in initial and continuing professional development to address gaps.
Quality instruction is constrained by a lack of information and communications technology (ICT) equipment, software and internet.	Identify and quantify needs and develop plans to equip all VET providers with appropriate ICT resources, training and technical assistance.

Teaching and links to the workplace

The majority of vocational teachers apply advanced educational methods and technologies.

Most classes have access to up-to-date equipment and adequate consumables. Digital technology is commonly used by teachers to prepare materials and as part of teaching and learning. However, 44% of teachers say that digital technologies are used only occasionally by students in their classes and only two-thirds of the respondents say that there is access to reliable and appropriate computer hardware and software in nearly all classes.

Teachers say that students are, for the most part, well motivated and that there are no behavioural problems. In general, teachers and principals are satisfied with their profession and their work. The majority report that they continue to learn and that they have the possibility of progressing in their career.

Issues	Recommendations
Most teachers have relatively little direct contact or cooperation with employers.	Develop effective mechanisms for cooperation between educational institutions and employers.
Only around one-third of vocational classes involve the use of digital educational technology by students.	Improve access to digital educational resources. Improve teachers' skills in applying digital educational resources.
Vocational teachers do not feel valued in Belarus.	Create opportunities for vocational teachers to gain recognition and rewards, for example, through the career system or by giving them opportunities for development, creativity and leadership and reviewing salaries.

Policy and strategy

Belarus has a regulatory framework for the professional development of teachers. There are strategies and programmes in place, which aim to improve the quality and relevance of professional development.

Organisations and institutions

Responsibilities relating to initial and continuing professional development for teachers and instructors are clearly assigned. There are eleven specialist colleges dedicated to the training of instructors and four higher education institutions with responsibility for the training of teachers (at Bachelor or Master's level). However, initial teacher education does not provide specialist training for many branches. The Republican Institute for Vocational Education (RIPO) is the main provider of CPD for teachers and instructors. It also sets standards, manages data and analyses needs and advises the ministry with respect to strategy. There is a specialist body that collects data and schools have clear responsibilities for the CPD of their teachers. Regional authorities help to research needs and provide pedagogical expertise and training. Employers contribute by providing traineeships for teachers. On occasion employers contribute to the design of some CPD programmes.

The participation of social partners in the provision or quality assurance of vocational teacher CPD is still very limited.

Issues	Recommendations
There is unmet demand from teachers for internships and CPD of teachers and instructors in the field of innovative technologies.	RIPO and regional authorities should work in partnership with enterprises to set up more internships for teachers that address innovative technologies which match the needs of teachers and instructors. RIPO and regional authorities should access additional expertise to design and deliver CPD that addresses training needs, e.g. by upskilling trainers of trainers, working with industry, higher education.
There are no organisations authorised to provide online CPD that is formally recognised.	The ministry should develop norms and laws to assign responsibility and recognise online CPD.
VET institutions have little interest in participating in international projects and programmes.	RIPO and regional authorities should develop awareness of the opportunities for participating in international technical assistance programmes (projects) among vocational education institutions.
Rapid changes in production technologies mean that teachers and instructors are not fully competent in current techniques and work practices.	The ministry and RIPO should develop incentives to motivate social partners to cooperate in the field of improving the professional competence of teachers.
Initial training does not address professional or pedagogical competences relevant to some profiles or sectors.	Assess the training gap and, if justified, develop flexible modes to meet this need, for example, initial training partly in vocational providers.

Design and quality assurance

National priorities for CPD for vocational teachers and trainers are set at ministry level taking account of national policies and analysis of information emerging from school evaluations. The ministry issues an annual letter which shapes the design and provision of CPD programmes for vocational teachers and instructors.

Funding of CPD for vocational teachers and instructors is assigned to RIPO and the regional methodological centres. The funding is used to design and provide CPD which is offered free of charge to vocational schools although schools pay for travel, food and accommodation of participating teachers.

It is not clear how effectively these processes work to identify and prioritise those training needs at the level of vocational schools which are most urgent. It is not clear how RIPO, donor organisations and the regional methodological centres coordinate their offer and how they provide new pedagogical and professional skills (as opposed to maintaining the current ones).

Issues	Recommendations
The development of industrial and educational technologies is accelerating and creating new training needs which have not been responded to by the CPD system.	Provide teachers and instructors with industrial experience in the field of modern technologies and CPD to enable them to make use of digital technologies in education.
Online learning has the potential to increase the diversity, volume and personalisation of the CPD offering.	Increase the share of educational programmes of advanced training implemented in distance learning.
The CPD offering does not always benefit from up-to-date information about teachers' training needs.	Develop training programmes on the basis of known needs.

CPD provision

Overall 65% of vocational teachers and instructors in Belarus participated in CPD over the previous 12 months – this is below the OECD average of 85%. Only 64% of these participants benefited from 30 hours or more CPD. More positively, 59% of teachers and instructors reported participating in CPD relating to their vocational specialism. Participation in CPD or training on employers' premises was only 16%. On the other hand, 49% of teachers and instructors independently make use of digital and online learning opportunities to support their own CPD.

CPD often takes the form of seminars – perhaps for 2 days in a span of 12 months. Most teachers collaborate in their teaching, particularly with their peers.

Some 94% of principals participated in courses, conferences or observational visits during the previous 12 months, of which 75% obtained at least 30 hours of CPD.

Issues	Recommendations
Enterprises have relatively little involvement in the design or delivery of CPD and teachers and instructors only rarely update their skills and knowledge of their professional speciality.	Industry should be engaged in designing and providing CPD, for example, by providing more internships for teachers.
Around one-third of teachers and instructors received no CPD in the previous 12 months.	All vocational teachers and instructors should have the opportunity to participate in some relevant CPD each year.

School-based CPD

Schools are expected to organise professional development for their own teachers. Usually a deputy principal is responsible. It seems that as much CPD takes place in schools as outside of schools but we do not know much about quality or effectiveness of this CPD.

Mentoring takes place in most schools. Mentors may receive additional payment for their work. Mentoring appears to be limited to new teachers and only 24% of mentors have received training. Induction for new teachers is usual but not universal.

Feedback to teachers as a result of observation of their teaching or assessment of students is not a common practice. There is little feedback from external inspectors or mentors or advisers.

Issues	Recommendations
The practice of providing expert feedback to teachers in the light of observation and the assessment of students does not seem to be well developed.	Schools could be encouraged and supported to provide feedback to teachers and instructors. This might take the form of training and guidance.
Much of CPD is provided in schools but it is not clear how this is quality assured and how well adapted it is to needs.	Support schools to evaluate and ensure the quality of the CPD they provide.
CPD provision is not always relevant to the professional development needs and career needs of teachers.	Strengthen communication between teachers, managers and methodologists within educational institutions who are working to meet the training needs of individuals, e.g. by developing individual training plans.

Relevance and impact of CPD

Overall approximately 80% of vocational teachers and instructors believe that the CPD offer is relevant. Some 17.7% of teachers and 17% of principals identified the lack of relevant professional development as a barrier to participation. However, around one-third of those teachers who received no training reported unmet training needs in relation to particular topics.

Teachers report that most CPD has moderate or good impact upon their teaching. However, for some kinds of training around 20% of participants reported that it had no or little impact.

The impact of CPD nationally and in schools is assessed through feedback from those who participated in training and from their school principals. The mechanisms and tools for quality management of CPD require further improvement.

Issues	Recommendations
For some kinds of CPD, around 20% of participants reported that it had little or no impact.	Review process by which needs are identified and teachers are matched to programmes.
There is an unmet need for CPD to prepare teachers and instructors of special subjects in relation to new production technologies.	Design and deliver CPD that addresses these needs at VET centres of excellence. Provide additional internships for teachers and instructors. Enact legislation to permit RIPO, the centres of excellence and other bodies to carry out this work.
There is an unmet need for CPD to address the use of ICT.	Elaborate modular multi-level qualification upgrading programmes tailored to the needs of employees in the field of ICT.

Recognition and incentivisation

The licensing system of educational institutions, the career promotion system and the low cost of training for teachers all encourage teachers to participate in CPD. One fifth of the teachers who participated in the survey noted that the barriers to their professional development are work schedule (19.7%) and the lack of time due to family or personal circumstances (21.5%). Diversification of the ways of providing CPD programmes (for example, wider use of online learning), as well as the recognition for competences obtained informally could help to overcome these barriers.

Issues	Recommendations
More than one in five teachers says that a lack of time is a barrier to participation in CPD.	Review whether CPD may be provided in more flexible ways, for example, in schools and online.
More than one in five teachers says that a lack of incentives is a barrier to participation in CPD.	Review whether the current requalification system and career ladder is successfully incentivising CPD that corresponds to real training needs.

Where to find out more

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