

CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR VOCATIONAL TEACHERS AND PRINCIPALS IN SERBIA 2018

Executive summary

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

https://openspace.etf.europa.eu/sites/default/files/2020-01/Serbia%20CPD%20survey%202018_rev.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

The purpose of the continuing professional development (CPD) survey 2018 was to contribute to evidence-based policy discussion, inform thinking and action at many levels of decision making, and stimulate further enquiry and proposals. An earlier version of this survey was piloted in South Eastern Europe and Turkey in 2015. Serbia was among these countries. The survey consisted of desk research, interviews and online administration of quantitative questionnaires for principals and teachers in vocational schools.

The desk research of relevant literature was based on policy documents, reports and previous research results, as well as academic papers exploring the CPD system in Serbia.

Interviews were carried out with eight respondents representing the following stakeholder groups: Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development; Institute for the Improvement of Education (Centre for Professional Development, Centre for Vocational Education and Training (VET) and Adult Education); Institute for Evaluation of Quality in Education; Council for VET and Adult Education, and vocational schools.

Two questionnaires were used: one for vocational teachers and the second for principals of vocational schools. The target population comprised all upper-secondary schools providing VET at ISCED level 3 and/or 4.

Serbian authorities supported the survey by identifying appropriate agencies and organisations that worked together with the ETF, and in collaboration with national experts, confirmed the design of the questionnaires and the methodology.

The Sampling Frame was the comprehensive list of 317 vocational schools in Serbia, provided from the Open Data section of the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development website, distributed in 30 administrative districts and under the supervision of 18 regional school authorities, including 20,622 teachers. Through random sampling, in the first step, 18 administrative districts (strata) were chosen. In the second step, within each stratum, probability proportional to size procedure was carried out. The planned sample was 110 schools out of 209 schools from 18 districts. Using this approach, 110 schools were sampled from 18 districts, with a total of 8,324 teachers as potential respondents. The survey was voluntary and a total of 1,769 teachers and 78 principals responded.

Results

Serbia's vocational teachers are mostly qualified graduates and 85% have more than five years of teaching experience. Some 34% are aged 50 or above and 85% have full-time contracts. On the other hand, 20% of them did not benefit from a pedagogical training while 22% had no practical classroom practice as part of their initial training.

In most vocational schools external stakeholders and other school staff are represented on the School Board. Most principals report that their staff and students participate in management groups within the school and they believe that decision making is shared and that the culture of their schools is collaborative. Principals see themselves as engaged in all aspects of school governance and interacting directly with all actors and stakeholders. According to school principals, schools are constrained by a lack of IT resources, competences for supporting students with difficulties and

instructional materials. Principals say that they are held back by the lack of financial resources, government regulation and policy and by the burden of the responsibilities they exercise.

Vocational teachers are pleased to be teachers and like teaching; they rate themselves as effective. They do not experience significant problems with respect to student behaviour or motivation. The majority of vocational teachers make regular use of IT to prepare materials and use modern pedagogical approaches regularly – to some degree.

However, many vocational teachers have only limited contact with the workplace and do not organise much learning that directly connects to the workplace. Consequently vocational teachers are less likely to judge themselves effective in relating VET to the workplace and to the needs of employers rather than achieving goals internal to their schools. Modern pedagogical approaches, e.g. group work and differentiation, are only partially adopted and the take up of digital tools and resources by students is limited.

In general, teachers believe they are not valued socially. Teachers and principals are dissatisfied with the current state of career-based progression.

CPD policy for teachers is articulated in several documents and is an integral part of the Serbian education policy, which is also confirmed in the strategy for this policy area. There is a clear regulation for teachers to undertake CPD (100 points in 5 years) in order to retain their licenses. Local self-governments allocate finances to the schools for CPD of teachers. CPD of teachers has its place in school documents, such as the school development plan. Teachers make their own portfolio of CPD and plan their own CPD according to the self-evaluation of teaching competences.

Despite this legal framework, the reality of implementation shows difficulties. Sometimes the teachers are not able to get CPD according to their real needs, due to insufficient or overly expensive VET CPD programmes. The gap between initial university education of most VET teachers and the requirement of a master's degree and 30+6 ECTS¹ in psychological, pedagogical and methodical disciplines is still not fully accessible to new teachers. Furthermore, in practice the license is not lost if 100 points are not achieved. More importantly, the license requirement is a relatively blunt tool for incentivisation.

VET teachers differ in the extent of their connections with workplaces in the areas they teach but this development need is not well served by CPD. VET teachers are not recognised as a category of teachers with specific CPD needs and this trend is continued in the Strategy 2020+, which places focus mainly on teachers of general education subjects and teachers in primary schools.

Separate regulations for teaching licenses for VET teachers are required. The issue of their initial education is addressed with an obligatory master's programme or CPD programme consisting of a package addressing five to six pedagogical, psychological and methodical competences (understanding the processes of learning and motivation, children development, planning, assessment, evaluation, interactive teaching, etc.), which should bring 30+6 ECTS as required by Law. Such a programme should be offered in flexible, more accessible and diverse modalities – e.g. part-time, online, as a custom-made programme – depending on the needs of each particular teacher. CPD connected with workplaces and vocational areas could also be prescribed by setting minimum hours of teachers' CPD in the workplaces within the 100-hour requirement.

¹ European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System

The Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development is the main policy maker although it consults with the National Education and VET Councils. The Centre for Professional Development of Employees in Education and the VET Centre act as both providers of CPD and regulators of other CPD providers. The VET Centre is the agency with a particular responsibility for CPD for VET teachers but it is relatively small and it does not provide a large number of specialised CPD programmes. With the new legal amendments, there is less contribution of independent opinion of social and institutional partners in CPD policy making.

Participation in CPD for VET teachers grew from 2015 to 2018. Participation in training out of school rose from 66% to 81% whilst participation in school-based training rose from 84% to 86%. Only 6% of vocational teachers reported non-participation in CPD. Training in an identified vocational specialism was up from 53% to 64%. Visits to other schools were up from 39% to 44%. However, CPD in businesses was down from 33% to 26%.

Modern forms of CPD appear to be increasing: 69% of vocational teachers had participated in online and video-based CPD – a remarkable figure. However, more than 50% of teachers have at best some participation in collaborative activities and around 25% had no participation in web-communities or ICT-based CPD. Only around one third of teachers participated in CPD involving mentoring, networks or research. Principals are better served: they more often participate in professional networks, mentoring or research activities than teachers.

There is a mix of CPD provision that should help Serbia to provide nationally urgent CPD to all who need it and to encourage the development of high quality independent provision of specialist CPD. However, uncertainty and constraints in funding discourage universities and businesses from committing to developing provision. The accreditation process operates on a three-year cycle which deters independent providers from responding quickly to new training opportunities.

The research indicates that vocational teachers express training needs with respect to both vocational and pedagogical issues. Although teachers rate relatively highly the impact of most of the CPD that they undertake, there is a significant training gap in particular topics.

There is also evidence that the process of matching teachers to the CPD offer is not very efficient. That is to say that there is not a good match between the priority needs of individual teachers and the training provided. Different teachers have different training needs and where training resources and time are scarce, it makes sense to target training well.

Of course, national and school development needs are important, as well as individual teacher needs. However, there is scope to improve the needs identification process and the matching process in schools. In some areas there may not be enough relevant training, for example with respect to new technologies in the workplace, updating professional knowledge and skills in relation to current practice in the workplace, approaches to developing cross-occupational competences for future work, ICT and student career guidance and counselling.

There are currently inadequate incentive measures in place when it comes to teachers' participation in CPD. The licensing requirement sets a minimum but it does not reward participation and it does not reward teachers that make use of new competences to give better or enhanced performance. A better connection between CPD and the career structure of vocational teachers could also help to ensure that CPD feeds into improved teaching and leadership. For example, a teacher who has a particular

responsibility for mentoring or for subject leadership or for liaison with business could be prepared for that responsibility through dedicated CPD.

Where to find out more

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