

## **TVET teachers in the time of digitalization: challenges and opportunities**

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Distinguished speakers, participants, ladies and gentlemen,

First of all, allow me to thank the GIZ TVET Academy and its partners for organizing this virtual conference on digitalization and TVET, especially devoted to the issues of TVET staff; and thank you for inviting UNESCO-UNEVOC to participate in this event.

Digitalization is speeding up labour market change, requiring young people to have digital skills and intelligence. They must understand digital risks as well as opportunities and TVET staff are expected to adjust quickly.

TVET responsiveness to labour market demand is partly what makes it so valuable. Digitalization is both challenging TVET provision while also emphasizing why it is so important.

The digital challenges facing TVET staff, in particular teachers and trainers are plentiful. Delivering remotely is a challenge for all teachers, but it is particularly daunting for TVET teachers, who will have to rely more and more on a digital means to deliver an education of which the core process lies in practice, or hands-on experience.

According to a report by ILO, in order to provide high-quality digital TVET, we need an instructional designer, who lays out the overall learning pathways combining school- and work-based learning and also incorporating distance and simulation-based learning experiences for the students.

There also has to be a teacher who will facilitate the student's interpretation of information that will be available freely and obtained through multiple sources.

Future TVET institutions also need their staff to deal with special technologies such as AI, VR, and AR, to name a few, both as a means of delivery and as content.

Last but not least, anyone teaching TVET must know how to translate the students' overall hybrid learning plans and processes into corresponding assessment tools, which is always challenging.

The list of roles expected of TVET staff in a digital age can go on to include other roles. Students learning remotely need more emotional and social support. Many TVET teachers are used to providing vocational counselling. They now have to go one-step further to address the students' emotional and social wellbeing as well.

In the best circumstances, a TVET institution may have the resources to recruit and retain different categories of professionals catering to these various aspects of a digitalized teaching environment.

In places with less resources, the division of work will be out of the question and one teacher will struggle, in vain, with all these different roles. The mounting challenges will eventually contribute to a widened digital gap.

More importantly, with digitalization, some professions in the labour market will eventually be phased out, as we all know. TVET teachers specialized in the skills on the declining path are at risk of losing their own jobs. The job security issue of TVET teaching staff is not new. Even in many OECD countries, a large portion of TVET teachers do not have a permanent job status. This situation will be exasperated by digitalization. TVET teachers remain as vulnerable to the evolving job market as their students are.

When we talk about teachers, we are, first and foremost, talking about human beings, not some sort of a mechanism generating an educational process. Nor are teachers a system that can be maintained and upgraded externally for better operation.

TVET teachers, facing multiple challenges, need time to digest the swirling environment of their profession and support to rise above them.

Are we providing them with enough support and guidance? The answer seems to be “not quite,” or “not yet” at best.

According to a survey conducted by Education International, teachers are reporting an increased workload and technological stress. They may not be consulted about the technologies to be introduced, let alone trained for the use of them; and policy documents often do not address issues of staff wellbeing.

UNESCO recommends that to support teachers in a crisis, there has to be a collection of precise data on their needs. Without data, no serious policy and systemic support can be devised. Second, teachers need a platform to share their needs and experiences as well as resources. Third, the absolute need to care for their professional development and support should not be ignored.

UNESCO-UNEVOC provides a platform for exchange across TVET providers and practitioners globally. We actively support TVET staff through our Leadership programme. We facilitate practitioners’ discussion through our Bridging Innovation and Learning in TVET project. We support collaboration and peer learning through our global UNEVOC Network.

In all of our work at UNESCO-UNEVOC we try to combine a holistic and humanistic approach by integrating the voices of TVET staff.

Thank you and I wish you a successful conference.