Technical meeting on the future of work in the education sector in the context of lifelong learning for all, skills and the Decent Work Agenda

17–21 May 2021

Conclusions

The Technical meeting on the future of work in the education sector in the context of lifelong learning for all, skills and the Decent Work Agenda,

Having met from 17 to 21 May 2021,

Adopts the following conclusions:

Decent work opportunities and challenges in the education sector

1. A human-centred sustainable and resilient approach to the future of work and recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic depend on lifelong learning and quality education for all, in line with the Sustainable Development Goal 4 on quality education and the ILO Centenary Declaration for the Future of Work (2019). Quality learning relies on motivated and well-supported qualified technical, pedagogical and administrative education personnel, working in a conducive teaching and learning environment. It also requires strong and adequately-resourced education institutions.

2. Technology-mediated education can promote learning and access to education. The growing use of education technology can pose challenges to working conditions and the professional autonomy of educators, data protection and privacy, quality of education and assessment of learning outcomes, governance of education, and to education workers. This will require relevant training and skills, access to digital infrastructure, particularly technology and the internet, and the capacity to deal with the social impact of technology on the learning environment. Opportunities therefore need to be explored in order to fully harness the potential of online learning.

3. Professional autonomy is coming under challenge due to political and economic factors, including the problematic use of standardization in education. While education requires high degrees of coordination, its implementation to suit the needs of individual learners in varying contexts requires a well-skilled and a responsive teaching workforce.

4. Working conditions of educators, including workload, have been impacted by hybrid and blended learning models. Teachers and trainers in particular are expected to work both on and off-line, creating risks of increased hours of work and responsibilities.

5. Incomes[2] in countries remain low and unstable for educators, in particular for those in rural settings. Decent work is essential in ensuring a quality education workforce.

6. The expanded role of educators in relation to global citizenship and social issues such as health, entrepreneurship education, community-building, climate change, well-being, social justice and peace requires adequate skills training, professional learning and development and support to fulfill these functions.

7. As frontline workers, education personnel are exposed to occupational health risks. Violence and harassment occur in education, including through information and communication technologies, and can increase during crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic and conflicts.

Ensuring effective lifelong learning and quality education for all: investing in the capabilities and decent work of educators

8. The ILO/UNESCO Recommendation concerning the Status of Teachers (1966) and the UNESCO Recommendation concerning the Status of Higher-Education Teaching Personnel (1997) remain highly relevant in the work of education, as do the recommendations of the Joint ILO/UNESCO Committee of Experts on the Application of the Recommendations concerning Teaching Personnel (CEART).

9. Education is not a commodity; it is a fundamental human right, a public good and a public responsibility. Quality education, including lifelong learning, should be equitable and accessible for all, including through technology. The private sector has a role in the provision of quality education.

10. Through specific skills, education prepares learners for citizenship, for life and the world of work, as well as for wider cultural, physical, spiritual, moral, psycho-social and intellectual development, so they can contribute to the construction of a sustainable and resilient human-centred approach to the future of work and a better world.

11. Education objectives, curricula and learning methods will need to evolve in response to the transformations in the world of work. There is great diversity in different countries in the organization of education.

12. Social dialogue based on the respect for freedom of association and the effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining has a crucial role in the establishment of education policies and in relation to working conditions of education personnel. Consultations, exchanges of information and other forms of dialogue between social partners and with government and other relevant actors are also important.

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[2] Income consists of income from employment (both paid and self-employment); property income; income from production of household services for own consumption; and current transfers received.

13. Policies and practices should close skills gaps and ensure that education and training systems are responsive to labour market needs, including related research and innovation, and society at large. This can include collaboration between education and skills authorities and workers' and employers' organizations, work-based learning schemes, recognition of prior learning through appropriate assessment by qualified teachers and trainers, skills councils, partnerships between education institutions and enterprises, and social dialogue around education and training policies.

14. Training for educators should include not only knowledge of requisite fields of learning and subject knowledge, but also the appropriate use of education technologies, cultures of indigenous and tribal peoples, foundational and future of work skills, knowledge of climate change and sustainable development, technology and other global drivers of change, social functions of educators, working with disadvantaged communities, and collaboration with other educators.

15. Investments need to be made to ensure equitable and inclusive access to and capacity to use education technologies both for educators and learners, bearing in mind gender equality and non-discrimination. Policies and practices to ensure quality of education technology, appropriate training for educators, decent work in relation to the use of technology, including in respect to work-life balance, procurement and governance of technology and education content, should be developed.

16. Technology can support educators but cannot replace them. Presential education including interaction between learners, teachers and trainers, and social relations remains the foundation of learning, which is a collective process.

17. Appropriate modes of learning should be considered to meet the needs of learners, including presential, blended and distance methods of learning. Harnessing the full potential of technological progress to support educators is essential.

18. Policies and practices should support recruitment, retention, motivation, and career development of education personnel and promote the status of education professions. This includes providing for adequate incomes.

19. Policies and practices to ensure occupational safety and health, including mental health and psychosocial support, protection from violence and harassment, and COVID-19 impacts are important to protect education and training staff. Urgent and concerted action is needed to ensure that education personnel and other frontline workers have speedy, equitable and affordable access to safe and effective COVID-19 vaccines. Governments and social partners have an important role to play in raising awareness on infection control and vaccination possibilities.

20. Policies and practices to address the intensification of educator workload and issues of well-being could include hiring adequate numbers of teachers, trainers and education support personnel. Education systems should be well-resourced to ensure high-quality education, taking into account the evolving role and tasks of teachers and trainers, as well as to ensure a work-life balance.

21. Policies and practices need to effectively promote gender equality and inclusion for all across all levels of education and in governance, as well as the participation of women in science, engineering, technology, mathematics and emerging fields.

22. Educators in TVET should be offered lifelong learning opportunities to ensure education systems can be responsive to the needs of industry and society in the future of work. There should be strong coordination between authorities responsible for education, training and labour, as well as social partners, and other relevant stakeholders. Improving the quantity and quality of educators can also contribute to elevating the image of TVET which remains a challenge.

23. Private education institutions and public-private partnerships play a role in the provision of education. Governments should strengthen governance and regulation of private education providers to take up their public responsibility to ensure quality, and decent work of education personnel.

Recommendations for future action by the International Labour Organization and its Members

24. Social dialogue, based on respect of freedom of association and the effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining, has a crucial role in designing policies to promote social justice. It is a means to achieve social and economic progress. Social dialogue and tripartism are essential for democracy and good governance.

25. Governments, in consultation with workers' and employers' organizations, should:

    a. develop education and skills development policies that are responsive to societal and labour market needs, and that ensure decent work in the education sector, including in relation to the use of education technology;

    b. formulate and jointly implement coherent and comprehensive policies and actions to promote capacity development for educators in relation to the evolving needs of society and the labour market;

    c. monitor equity and equality in access to quality education and education technology;

    d. develop policies and measures that ensure appropriate privacy and personal data protection and respond to challenges and opportunities in the world of work relating to the digital transformation of work;

    e. develop or strengthen national strategies on lifelong learning and TVET, with a view to promoting decent work for education personnel;

    f. provide adequate working conditions and safety and health at work, including mental well-being for all education personnel, as well as protection against violence and harassment and communicable diseases;

g. provide universal access to comprehensive and sustainable social protection to all workers in education;

h. explore policies and strategies to promote educators' work-life balance in the context of a digital world of work;

i. explore policies and strategies for technology adoption including artificial intelligence and machine learning.

26. Governments have the duty to adopt, implement and effectively enforce national laws and regulations to ensure that the fundamental principles and rights at work and relevant ratified international labour Conventions are applied in the education sector, and to promote quality education and life-long learning.

27. The Office, in its follow-up to the obligations arising out of the Centenary Declaration for the Future of Work, should:

a. Promote ratification and effective implementation of robust and up-to-date international labour standards relevant to the education sector;

b. strengthen the capacity of constituents to respect, promote and realize the fundamental principles and rights at work in the education sector;

c. promote these Conclusions, the ILO/UNESCO Recommendation concerning the Status of Teachers, the ILO Policy Guidelines on the promotion of decent work for early childhood education personnel and other relevant tools related to the education sector, including through regional activities;

d. build the capacity of constituents to engage in effective social dialogue in the education sector, including through technical assistance and regional meetings and the development of relevant tools, in consultation with governments and social partners;

e. pursue and disseminate research and knowledge management activities on trends, developments and decent and sustainable work challenges and opportunities in the public and private education sector, including the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic as well as technologies on educators, the use of green technologies in education infrastructure, privacy and personal data protection, and public-private partnerships;

f. conduct labour market analysis to better understand existing and future skills needs required by the rapidly evolving world of work, including the skills and knowledge needs of teachers and trainers;

g. engage in development cooperation to advance decent work and capacity development in the education sector, keeping in mind the diverse circumstances, needs, priorities and levels of development of its member States; and

h. reinforce its cooperation with other organizations and education financing mechanisms to promote policy coherence and decent work in pursuit of its sustainable

and resilient human-centred approach to the future of work with respect to people working in the education sector, as well as education institutions;

i. engage with other relevant stakeholders, such as Ministries of education and institutions responsible for training, as well as tertiary education institutions, in order to promote decent work in education.

Annex

List of instruments referred to in the meeting

Declarations:

- Centenary Declaration for the Future of Work (2019)

- Declaration on Social Justice for a Fair Globalization (2008)

- Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work (1998)

International Labour Conference (ILC):

- Conclusions on Skills for Improved Productivity, Employment Growth and Development, 2008

International Labour Standards:

Fundamental Conventions:

- Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention, 1948 (No. 87)
- Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention, 1949 (No. 98)

- Forced Labour Convention, 1930 (No. 29) and its Protocol of 2014

- Abolition of Forced Labour Convention, 1957 (No. 105)

- Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138)

- Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182)

- Equal Remuneration Convention, 1951 (No. 100)

- Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, 1958 (No. 111)

Technical Conventions and Recommendations:

- Hours of Work (Commerce and Offices) Convention, 1930 (No. 30)

- Protection of Wages Convention, 1949 (No. 95)

- Labour Clauses (Public Contracts) Convention, 1949 (No. 94)

- Social Security (Minimum Standards) Convention, 1952 (No. 102)

- Social Protection Floors Recommendation, 2012 (No. 202)

- Weekly Rest (Commerce and Offices) Convention, 1957 (No. 106)

- Workers with Family Responsibilities Convention, 1981 (No. 156)

- Workers with Family Responsibilities Recommendation, 1981 (No. 165)

- Occupational Safety and Health Convention, 1981 (No. 155) and its Protocol of 2002
- Home Work Convention, 1996 (No. 177)
- Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention, 1989 (No. 169)
- Violence and Harassment Convention, 2019 (No. 190)
- Violence and Harassment Recommendation, 2019 (No. 206)
- Employment and Decent Work for Peace and Resilience Recommendation, 2017 (No. 205)
- Paid Educational Leave Convention, 1974 (No. 140).
- Human Resources Development Convention, 1975 (No. 142)
- Human Resources Development Recommendation, 2004 (No. 195)

Other ILO instruments:

- ILO/ UNESCO Recommendation concerning the Status of Teachers (1966)
- ILO Policy Guidelines on the promotion of decent work for early childhood education personnel (2014)

Instruments of other international organizations:

- UNESCO Recommendation concerning the Status of Higher-Education Teaching Personnel (1997)