

09 Initial, in-service and continuing education and training for VET school teachers

Initial teacher education and training

Initial training of VET school teachers varies widely, due to the different ranges of subjects offered in the VET school sector. Basically, three types of teachers can be distinguished in these schools:

- Teachers of general education subjects
- Teachers of occupation-related theory
- Teachers of occupation-related practice

Teachers of occupation-related theory

are graduates of a subject-related university-based programme and have several years of relevant professional practice in the business sphere.

Teachers of occupation-related practice

are graduates of a subject-related VET programme and have several years of relevant professional practice in the business sphere.

Teachers of general education subjects

are graduates of a university-based teacher training programme. They are obliged to undergo one year of **teaching practice** before joining a school.

Teachers at part-time vocational schools and teachers of occupation-related practice as well as classes of occupation-related theory at schools for intermediate vocational education and colleges for higher vocational education need to acquire a teaching diploma at a university college of teacher education.

Practice orientation constitutes a key element of the VET school sector – this is underlined by the fact that all teachers in this sector – with the exception of teachers of general education subjects – are obliged to furnish proof of completion of **several years of professional practice** in the world of business.

With the academic year 2016/2017, a **new organisation of teacher training programmes** will enter into force in line with the Bologna structure – bachelor's programme comprising a total of 240 ECTS and master's programme comprising a total of 60 ECTS, with the latter optional for teachers of occupation-related practice and for teachers of occupation-related theory with a subject-oriented tertiary qualification.

In-service and continuing education and training of teachers

In-service education and training of teachers:

In line with the principle of professionalisation, it is indispensable for all teachers to keep their level of occupation-related knowledge and skills as well as teaching methods up to date. This is of particular

importance in the VET school sector due to the continually decreasing half-life of subject-specific knowledge.

Continuing education and training of teachers:

Teachers have the possibility to acquire additional qualifications that go beyond their formal qualifications obtained at university. Continuing education and training programmes are certified and often connected with new qualifications.

Due to the **diversified nature of the VET school sector**, nationwide coordination of in-service and continuing education and training for teachers is very important. In addition, a high degree of flexibility needs to be ensured by responding quickly to demand.

University colleges of teacher education

are tertiary education establishments providing initial, in-service and continuing education and training for teachers. In every Austrian province there is one federal university college of teacher education, and in Burgenland a foundation has been set up under the name Private Burgenland University College of Teacher Education. In addition, there are a university for agricultural and environmental policy and private university colleges of teacher education run by the church.

The Federal Ministry of Education and Women's Affairs is in charge of university colleges of teacher education. Due to the autonomy of higher learning establishments, the inner structures of the individual institutions and, as a result, the allocation of tasks to departments / institutes differ enormously.

As far as the organisation of in-service and continuing education and training activities is concerned, these may be provided for a particular school (in-house training), a region or province, or several (or all) provinces, depending on the target group. As far as content is concerned, these activities can be provided for one or several specific subjects, (subject) areas or types of schools.

Main fields of in-service and continuing education and training of teachers

The main fields are **subject-specific scientific theory**, **subject-specific didactics**, **general pedagogy** and **personal development**. From the wide range of themes, the following should be highlighted:

- **Teaching of key qualifications**
Teaching related to this theme is of key importance within the framework of programmes.
- **Personal development, communication, social competence**
Particularly at school level, the teaching of knowledge builds on interpersonal processes. Therefore, themes related to personal development play a major part.

- **School, teaching and quality development**
University colleges of teacher education support schools in their activities related to school development, particularly regarding the QIBB (VET Quality Initiative) focus, which is implemented in all school types and in all fields of VET. Additionally, attention is paid to educational standards and the further development of evidence-based school and teaching development.
- **Courses for newly recruited teachers with a teaching diploma**
Newly recruited teachers are familiarised with the particular features of the VET school sector and the connected specifics of the subject which is to be taught.
- **Education and training for newly recruited teachers without a teaching diploma**
Before joining a school, teachers of occupation-related theory with a subject-specific university qualification are obliged to complete a pedagogical course at university colleges of education within the framework of in-service and continuing education and training programmes for teachers. The course for new teachers at schools for intermediate vocational education and colleges for higher vocational education is also offered in the form of online modules. Vocational school teachers and teachers of occupation-related practice also complete teacher training programmes at university colleges of teacher education. See: "Initial teacher training".
- **School management and leadership**
The programmes for managers aim to impart qualifications related to quality assurance, location-related school and teaching development, and responsibility for outcomes. In view of the school heads' important management position, special courses are offered for this group.
- **Competence orientation**
University colleges of teacher education support schools in their implementation of competence orientation, which is to become a major component of lesson planning, teaching in practice, and performance assessment.
- **Standardised, competence-oriented matriculation and diploma examination**
- **In-service and continuing education and training of teachers in the business sphere**
In numerous subjects, the latest technological developments can only be acquired and learned in "real businesses". Therefore, university colleges of teacher education also organise on-the-job training for teachers in the business sphere, i.e. the teachers participate actively in the production process or in business management.
- **Language diversity, multilingualism, interculturality and internationalisation**
- **Foreign languages and international certificates**

In view of the importance of foreign languages, targeted conversation and special-purpose courses for English and sometimes French and Italian are offered not just to foreign language teachers for their own subject, but also to all other teachers. Particular attention is paid to teachers who have English/French/Italian as their teaching language (CLIL). Foreign language teachers are trained to become examiners so they can also award international certificates to pupils.

- **Electronic media in the classroom**
Programmes are prepared to promote the pedagogical, didactic application of electronic media in the classroom. Special attention is paid to teaching methods that use and rely on state-of-the-art information and communication technologies, such as e-learning, e-didactics, blended learning.
- **Further development of inclusive education**
As well as the further development of inclusive education, inclusive/integrative VET continues to be a focus.
- **Individualisation, support for the gifted and talented**
Courses are offered to enhance teaching, diagnostic and support competence to encourage individualisation and differentiation as well as the gifted and talented.
- **Environment**
Topics related to the environment are given particular emphasis in programme planning. They include learning for sustainable development and environmental economics.
- **Political education/democratic education**
This priority aims to prepare young people for life in society and the political sphere.

Other activities of university colleges of teacher education

- **Educational fact research and VET research**
This includes implementation of research projects with the objective of academically analysing problems that are of importance for the profession in everyday school routine and initial, in-service and continuing education and training of teachers. The findings of these studies are used to work out appropriate solutions and develop them in line with methodology for in-service and continuing teacher training.
- **Other services**
 - Support for working groups of teachers
 - Project centres, partnerships with institutes of in-service teacher training abroad
 - EU projects
 - Coaching, counselling, support in organisational development and educational processes, pedagogical support and guidance concepts such as for learning design, learning assistance, mentoring, peer learning