S4J

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SKILLS FOR JOBS

RESEARCH REPORT

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SKILLS *for* JOBS

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Abbreviations

ADA	Austrian Development Agency
CAD/CAM	Computer-aided design and computer-aided manufacturing
CEDEFOP	European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training
CoE	Council of Europe
CRT	Core Research Team
EOs	Employment Offices
ETF	European Training Foundation
EU	European Union
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GoA	Government of Albania
GIZ	German Society for International Cooperation (Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit)
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
IDM	Institute for Democracy and Mediation
ILO	International Labor Organization
INSTAT	Institute of Statistics of Albania
LFS	Labour Force Survey
MFC	Multi-Functional Centre
MoES	Ministry of Education and Sport
MoSWY	Ministry of Social Welfare and Youth
MRM	Monitoring Results Management
NAVETQ	National Agency for Vocational Education and Training and Qualifications
NEETs	Not in employment, education or training
NES	National Employment Service
NESS	National Employment and Skills Strategy
NSDI	National Strategy for Development and Integration
OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
S4J	Skills for Jobs Project

SDC	Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation
SEE	South Eastern Europe
SME	Small and Medium Enterprises
SRs	Senior Researchers
ToT	Training of Trainers
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
VE	Vocational Education
VET	Vocational Education and Training
VS	Vocational School
VSD	Vocational Skills Development
VT	Vocational Training
VTC	Vocational Training Centre
WBL	Work-Based Learning

Introduction

Albania is driven by the European integration agenda. In June 2014, the country was granted EU candidate status, the first step towards full EU membership. Despite difficulties with the unfinished transition agenda, the Government of Albania has built a strategic vision to transform the country's economy from a low productivity, informal and import-dependent economy to a modern, innovative and highly productive one. With international support and inspired by 'Europe 2020' Agenda and SEE 2020, Albania is finalizing the National Strategy for Development and Integration[1] (NSDI), while it has developed 8 sectorial strategies. Other strategies are to be finalized during this year.

The economy of Albania has maintained limited but positive growth during the recent global financial and economic crisis. The overall industrial and trade performance is characterized by a lack of competitiveness of the economy. Among main elements hampering competitiveness are lack of specialized and skilled labor force and a large informal economy. According to the Global Competitiveness Report 2015-2016, Albania ranks in the 93rd position of 140 countries losing 4 places from 2012-2013. In labor market efficiency, the country ranks 97th (losing 4 places from 2014-2015), whereas in innovation, the country is at 118th[2] place. In terms of the general socio-economic development, as measured by the Human Development Index (HDI), the country figures in the 'high human development' category, ranking 85th out of 187 countries and territories in 2015, down by 15 positions compared to 2012[3].

Labor market in Albania is characterized by high unemployment, especially among young population, informality and low participation of girls and women. Unemployment rate in Albania (for the age-group 15-64 years old) is 17.9% (4th quarter 2015) and, compared to the last quarter of 2013, this rate has increased by 0.9 percentage points[4]. Youth unemployment (aged 15-29) remains a crucial issue, since the rate has continuously increased from 23.6% in the first quarter of 2012 to 34.1% in in the first quarter of 2015. Youth aged 15-29 not in employment, education or training (NEETs) accounted for 34.5 % of all youth population in 2014[5].

Women in Albania continue to be under-represented in employment. They are less present in almost any employment sector of the country[6] and most of labor market indicators are particularly low for women. The gender gap index (0.701) puts Albania in 70th place from a total of 145 countries in 2015[7]. The improvement by 38 places compared to 2013 shows an impressive positive tendency. However, a lot remains to be done mainly in labor market participation and economic empowerment.

1 Expected to be approved in Spring 2016.

2 The Global Competitiveness Report 2015-2016, World Economic Forum

3 Human Development Report 2015, UNDP

4 Labor Force Survey, Q1.2012-Q4.2015, INSTAT

5 INSTAT 2015

6 INSTAT (2014) http://www.instat.gov.al/media/257796/femra_dhe_meshkuj_2014_.pdf

7 The Global Gender Report 2015, WEF: http://reports.weforum.org/global-gender-gap-report-2015/economies/#economy=ALB

Informal employment is a major concern for the labor market governance institutions in Albania. Over a quarter (25.6%) of those participating in the labor force are contributing family workers (females 1.7 times more likely than males) adding to the large number of people working informally in micro and small enterprises[8].

Latest LFS data show that the employment rate (group of 15-64 years of age) is higher for the employed with vocational upper secondary education (64.8 %), followed by those with high education (62.2 %). When analyzing the employed with upper secondary education, the employment rate is significantly higher for persons with vocational upper secondary education compared to persons with general upper secondary education, respectively 64.8 % over 49 %. The unemployment rate for persons with general secondary education is 22.5 % or 4.8 percentage points higher than the national average. The unemployment rate for persons with university is 20.8%, while for those with vocational upper secondary school and those with 8/9-year education, unemployment rate is 14.6 %.

With international support and inspired by the 'Europe 2020' agenda, Albania has developed a National Employment and Skills Strategy (NESS 2014-2020) to ensure greater opportunities for youth to secure decent work and income over the life cycle, contributing to a virtuous circle of poverty reduction, sustainable development and social inclusion. At the central level, the Ministry of Social Welfare and Youth (MoSWY) is in charge of vocational skills development and employment promotion sectors. Its ultimate goal is to build a labor-market focused skills development system to enhance employment and entrepreneurship perspectives for the rural and urban unemployed, while addressing their skills needs at the same time, both in the formal and informal sectors. The understanding of the importance of cooperation with the private sector in the framework of such undertaking is gaining weight. The dynamics of the Vocational Skills Development (VSD) reform provide an optimal momentum for intervention.

Switzerland has given a substantial contribution to the Vocational Education and Training sector in Albania over a time span of almost two decades. In view of the political will and institutional support to turn VSD into an engine of employment growth in Albania, the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) in dialogue with the Government of Albania (GoA) developed, in 2015, the 'Skills for Jobs' (S4J) Program. The project aims to contribute in developing Albania into a more competitive economy and socially inclusive society, by improving and increasing VSD offers for unemployed and underemployed women and men in Albania, with a particular focus on youth, allowing them to find an attractive and decent job. The project will facilitate the development of quality VSD offers by including dual approaches and new ways of learning. It will facilitate the development of VSD providers in offering labor market integration facilities with strong networks with employers and the organized private sector. Young women and men and special needs groups will profit from new labor market and gender-sensitized formal and non-formal training offers.

The first phase of S4J lasts from October 2015 through to end of February 2019 with funding from SDC at a total value of 6.3 million Swiss Francs. Swisscontact is contracted to implement the project. The Inception Phase started on the 1st of October 2015 and lasted until mid of April

8 Quarterly Labor Force Survey – Fourth Quarter 2015, INSTAT

2016. It served to create a solid base for: (1) the set-up of the Project Facilitation Unit, (2) economic sector choice, (3) decision on geographic focus areas, (4) analysis of the VSD system functioning specifically regarding new ways of inclusive learning, and (5) the development of the Project Document.

Swisscontact subcontracted the Institute for Democracy and Mediation (IDM), a Tirana-based Think-Tank, to undertake a thorough analysis a) to support with evidence the selection of the sectors and the geographic focus and b) of the VSD system functioning specifically regarding new ways of inclusive learning. A Core Research Team (CRT) led the research supported by 10 senior experts in different economic sectors and 21 research assistants. This report presents in detail the process leading to the selection of the sectors and geography as well as a thorough analysis of the VSD system in Albania, focusing in four economy sectors.

Methodology

In designing, implementing and reporting the analysis the Core Research Team worked under the vision of a process based on sound and reliable evidence. Using evidence to guide decisions about actions is at the core of S4J project philosophy. Decision-making based on evidence ensures that the selected sectors/regions/interventions are most likely to achieve the project's expected outcomes. Evidence-informed options include activities, interventions, and programs that are informed by the best available, up-to-date, and reliable evidence. Research-based actions result in improved effectiveness and efficiency, and equitable access to services and programs (Bowen & Zwi, 2005). In addition to identifying and prioritizing new actions and programs, evidence-informed options can determine which current interventions and programs should be modified and/or ceased. The S4J project will operate based on this principle.

While there is no single approach for identifying evidence-informed options for skills for jobs actions, the CRT followed these guiding and fundamental steps:

1. Ask answerable research questions to guide searches in the areas
2. Search for the best evidence
3. Critically appraise all available evidence
4. Apply the evidence to the questions posed
5. Evaluate the process for identifying evidence-informed options

The main goal of this analysis is to serve to the S4J project in creating a thorough and robust understanding and analysis of how the economic sectors in the country operate, relevant skill needs and jobs' potential, and how attractive they are to the target audience. Even though previous research has been documented, the purpose of this study remains that of an exploratory research. Though exploratory research is defined as the initial research into a hypothetical or theoretical idea, it is also ideal when a deeper understanding is required on a research problem. Most often, exploratory research lays the initial groundwork for future research. Since our research is a baseline, it will also serve as the foundation for future action research in the project. As part of the detailed analysis carried out, baseline data were also collected for setting up a well-underpinned Monitoring Results Management (MRM) system.

The findings of the baseline study served to:

- Properly understand the context in selected sectors and identify needs and opportunities in terms of sectors and actors for being engaged to contribute to the defined overall goal of the project;
- Properly understand the challenges of the main target groups - young women and men, as well as special needs groups - in the VSD provision

system and labor market integration;

- Identify systemic constraints that hinder change and the well-functioning of the system, including in-depth analysis of relationships, capacities and incentives of actors involved and the 'rules' and 'functions' that support the delivery system.

To meet these objectives, the main guiding research questions for the baseline study were:

1. Which sectors/regions/providers have the potential of a change maker and a success story to invest in? What is the readiness level?
2. How enabling is the current environment and how can it be improved to maximize labor market insertion of VET youth (formal and non-formal)?
3. What are the barriers and opportunities to attract youth to VET (formal or non-formal)?
4. How can disadvantaged groups (women, Roma/Egyptian, etc.) be provided with equal chances?

To best address the research questions of the analysis, the CRT applied a mixed method design (Creswell, 2003)[9]. For a thorough investigation of the research questions and to enhance confidence in the ensuing findings we also combined the triangulation of data, methods, and researchers providing a convergent validity of the following aimed findings:

- Identification of sectors/regions/providers for intervention;
- Thorough mapping of the context in specific sectors; identification of needs and opportunities in terms of sectors and actors;
- Full understanding of the challenges that young women and men, as well as special needs groups are faced with in the VSD provision system and labor market integration; and
- Systemic constraints that hinder change and the well-functioning of the systems are mapped and understood, including in-depth analysis of relationships, capacities and incentives of actors involved and the 'rules' and 'functions' that support the delivery system;

In this research design (Figure 1), triangulation is manifested in all four forms (Denzin, 1970). Below we elaborate on each of them.

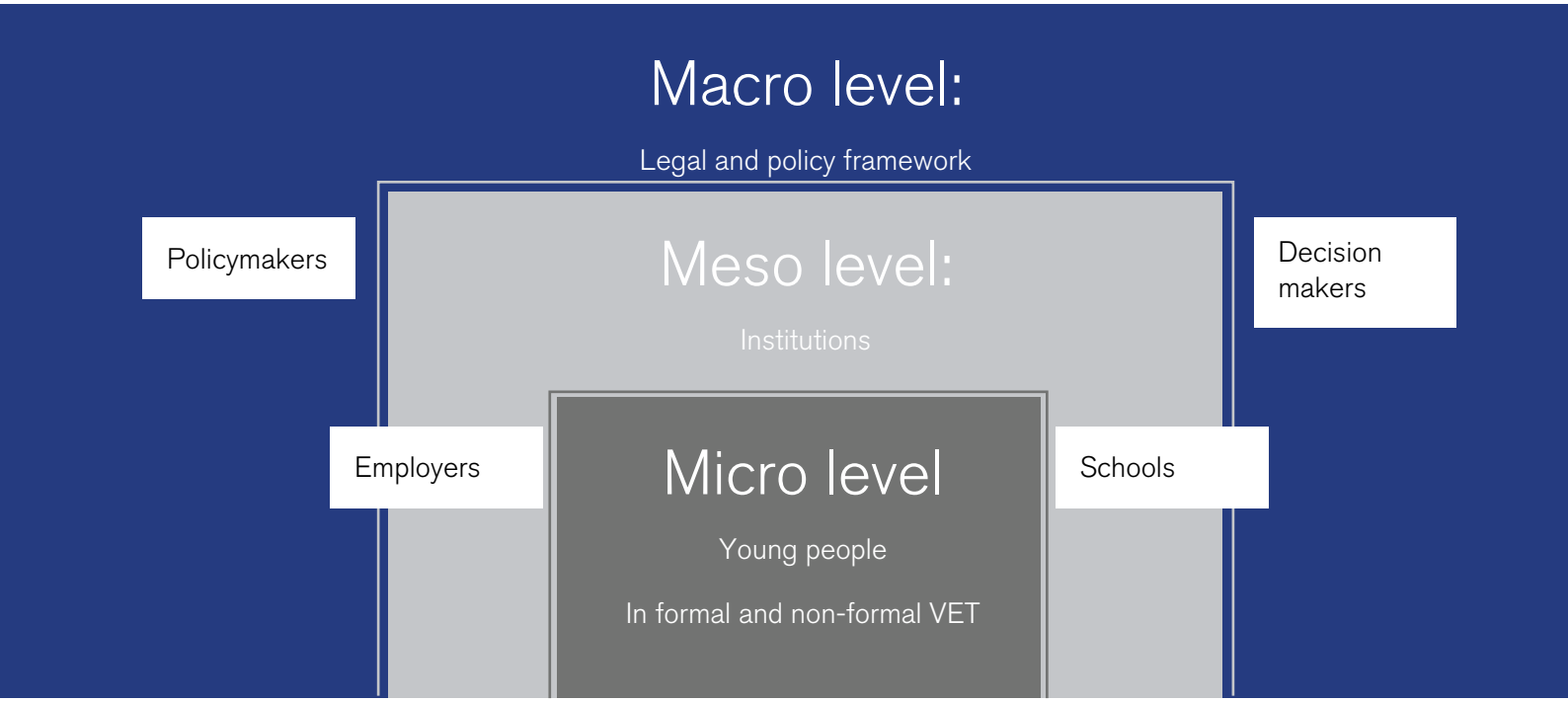
1. Data triangulation entails gathering data through several sampling strategies, so that slices of data at different times and social situations, as well as on a variety of people, are gathered.

In this analysis, data are generated from primary sources from a variety of people and levels, ranging from micro to macro level. As presented in Figure 2, at the micro level the research project has targeted the main beneficiaries of the initiative – young people

9 In http://isites.harvard.edu/fs/docs/icb.topic1334586.files/2003_Creswell_A%20Framework%20for%20Design.pdf

Figure 1. Research design model

Figure 2. Triangulation of data sources



in formal and non-formal VET in Albania. At the meso-level, data were gathered from people representing key institutions shaping/influencing beneficiaries, decision-making, barriers and opportunities, namely the school/provider and the employer. Finally, at the macro level, research questions were explored through data gathered from representatives of stakeholders shaping the legal and policy frameworks, where the first two other categories (at micro and meso level) operate.

2. Investigator triangulation refers to the use of more than one researcher in the field to gather and interpret data.

The research team combines expertise from the four main areas of interest: Vocational Education and Training (VET), Labor Market Integration (LMI), Gender and Social Inequality, and ICT expertise. In addition, sector-specific senior experts and researchers in selected sectors of interest conducted sector-based analyses.

3. Theoretical triangulation refers to the use of more than one theoretical position in interpreting data.

The data will be interpreted from several different paradigms springing from economic sciences, social sciences, education and ICT schools.

4. Methodological triangulation refers to the use of more than one method for gathering data.

Last, but most importantly, the research combines a variety of qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection and analysis:

- **Survey**

The survey was conducted during December 2015, using a two-stage stratified cluster design. For the student's survey, sectors currently provided at vocational education schools and centers are considered as the strata. Some 60 percent of the schools offering programs related to that sector were randomly selected within strata using probability proportional to size sampling techniques. In this technique, larger schools in terms of enrolment have higher probability of being selected. To correct for this, in the second stage, the same number of students was selected in each school of the sample by

Table 1. List of Key Informants interviewed

No	Name Surname	Institution	Position	Date of Interview
1	Blendi Klosi	Ministry of Social Welfare and Youth	Minister	24.12.2015
2	Agron Pullumi	Ministry of Social Welfare and Youth	Director of VET Directory	21.10.2015
3	Sonila Limaj	National Agency for VET and Qualifications	Director	02.11.2015
4	Brikena Nallbani	National Employment Service	Deputy General Directress	21.10.2015
5	Ornela Koleka	Ministry of Education and Sports	IT Department Director	04.11.2015
6	Geron Kamberi	Agency for Research Technology and Innovation	General Director	13.11.2015
7	Silvana Mjeda	Swiss Development Cooperation	National Programme Officer	05.11.2015
8	Sabine Hartig	German Agency for International Cooperation	VET Program Director	27.10.2015
9	Evelyn Viertel	European Training Foundation	ETF's country manager in charge of Albania	24.11.2015
10	Maria Gomes	International Labor Office	Chief technical adviser	23.10.2015
11	Florenc Qosja	Austrian Development Agency	Deputy Head of Office and Head of Administration	09.11.2015
12	Ana Zaharian	Swisscontact	Chief administration officer	26.10.2015
13	Dajna Sorensen	UNDP	Skills for Employment Project Manager	28.10.2015
14	Edlira Muhedini	Helvetas	RISI Albania Project Manager	29.09.2015
15	Evis Pogoni	Coca Cola, Albania	Human Resources Manager	10.11.2015
16	Anjeza Kelmendi	Balfin Group	Human Resources Manager	12.12.2015

using simple random sampling. The sample resulted in a size of 912 students, and is representative at profile/direction level. Simple random sampling was used for the teachers of vocational schools and trainees and instructors of vocational centers. The analysis in this chapter is based on figures related to the overall system and detailed in the selected four sectors.

- **In-depth interviews**

- **Focus Group Discussions (FGD)**

With the purpose of a better understanding in depth the perspective of various groups of interest on the questions of how enabling the environment is, what the barriers faced are and how they could be addressed, in-depth interviews and focus group discussions were designed and conducted with key informant (in the preparatory phase of the research) and with pre- and post- VET and high school youth from urban and rural areas.

A total of 16 interviews were conducted with key informants, representing policy makers at MoSWY and MoES, subordinate institutions such as NAVETQ and NES, important donors and international implementing agencies of VET and employment projects and business representatives. These interviews were designed to investigate the current situation on youth VSD and employment, policies, plans, initiatives, challenges and lessons learned, with a special focus on innovative IT based teaching methods and business involvement in formal and non-formal VSD.

In-depth interviews and focus group discussions with pre- and post- VET and general high school youth were primarily focused in capturing and understanding:

- Reasons behind choosing VET vs. general high education;
- Challenges and opportunities of Labor Market Insertion among VET vs general high school graduates.

Table 2. List of Focus Groups and Interviews

Focus Groups (public secondary school)	Participants No.	Male	Female	Group Age
1 Maj	12	4	8	14-15
Katund i Ri	10	5	5	14-15
Farka	19	5	11	14
Total (3)	**41**	**14**	**24**	**14-15**

Interviews	Date	Male	Female	Age
VET school/unemployed	23.12.2015	-	Yes	19
VET school/unemployed	17.12.2015	Yes	-	20
VET school/employed	17.12.2015	Yes	-	29
VET school/employed	17.12.2015	Yes	-	22
Public high school/unemployed	21.12.2015	-	Yes	20
Public high school/employed	23.12.2015	-	Yes	20
Total (6)	**-**	**3**	**3**	**19-29**

Structure of the Report

This report provides a description of the process leading to and the results for the selection of the economy sectors, the geography the 'Skills for Jobs' Project will intervene, and the VSD providers that will benefit and cooperate with the project. It also provides an analysis of the institutional framework and programs currently offered in the country, focusing mainly on recent evidence drawn upon data collected through a sector-level representative survey with VET students, trainees, teachers, and instructors to shed light on issues related to access to VET, VET provision quality, use of ICT learning methods in VET, employability, future expectations of VET graduates, and relationship with businesses.

The report is organized as follows.

Section 1 describes the process leading to the selection of the sectors and regions where the project will focus as well as the VSD providers that will primarily benefit from the intervention.

Section 2 provides a picture of the institutional framework under which VET in Albania operates, followed by a discussion on the modalities of VET provision, programs, enrollment and providers' networks in

Section 3. The evidence provided in this section is based on secondary data and interviews with the key informants.

Section 4 uses the dedicated survey data gathered in this project to highlight problems related to access to VET. It provides the socio-economic profile of the VET students, including academic performance of VET students, ease of access and equal opportunities. An overview of the quality of VET provision is provided in Section 5.

Section 5. This section concentrates on evaluations of education and training programs, such as the ration between theory and practice, evaluation of teaching methods and materials, learning infrastructure, as well as an evaluation of the experience and qualification of the academic staff in the eyes their students/trainees.

Section 6 offers an extended view of the ICT devices and methods used in the VET system, such as use of computers, ease of access to them, and use of Internet and technology in the teaching and learning process. It also includes a discussion on the perceived challenges, benefits and opportunities related to the application of this techniques in the actual system as well as for (hypothetical) blended learning.

Section 7. The employability and future expectations of the students and trainees are analyzed in this section The evidence includes relevance and adequacy of information on employment opportunities, main sources of information, students' intentions and expectations for the near future after graduation, transition duration, and the main possible employers. In addition,

the evidence on possible factors that need to be addressed in order to improve employment probabilities is discussed in this section.

Section 8 analyses the relations of the VET schools and centers with employers, especially with regard to students' professional practices as well as other modalities of collaboration between them.

Section 9 provides concludes.

Section 1: Selection of Sectors, Regions and Providers

Selection of Sector

The task for the CRT was to provide recommendations, based on analysis, for the relevant stakeholders that could help make a decision for selecting the sectors a) in need of occupational reform with the best potential for generating more and better jobs for young boys and girls that are sustainable, and b) with the best potential to contribute to the smart growth of the country's economy. In addition, the CRT provided recommendations for the geographic focus and the VSD providers with the potential of a change maker.

The analysis focused on 9 sectors preselected by the CRT based on a set of indicators (economic, labor market and social) and factors (VET, gender sensitivity, technology and innovation, government priority, relevant previous research, green economy, and smart growth) with relevance to the overall goal and specific objectives of the project. The sectors selected for further analysis:

Table 3. Pre-selected economic sectors

ECONOMIC SECTOR	FOCUS
Agriculture	Production
Fishery and Aquaculture	
Electricity, gas, steam and air conditioning supply	Gas and renewable energies
Tourism	Hospitality, Agro-tourism, Cultural Heritage
Textiles	High value chain segments/process
Waste Management and Remediation	Waste treatment/ recycling
Construction	Energy/resource efficiency buildings
Transportation	Smart and green transportation of goods and people
ICT	Information technology system (software and hardware) solutions
	Data collection and processing

For the purpose of this analysis, the CRT referred to NACE Rev 2 statistical classification of economic activities in Albania (21 categories with a total of 99 economic activities). Each category and economic activity has been 'weighted' separately.

Ten senior researchers/experts[10] (SRs) with

10 The senior researchers engaged for this exercise are: Assoc. Prof. Ermira Shehi (PhD) for Textile; Selami Xhepa (PhD) for Energy; Gavrosh Zela (PhD(c)) for Waste Management, Recycling and Water Supply; Prof.

extended academic/research experience in the pre-selected 9 sectors assisted the CRT by conducting sector-specific analysis. The SRs conducted literature review and a total of 90 interviews during November 15th – December 23rd 2015, with companies/ employers from both the private and the public sector. Based on the literature review and the findings from the interviews, the SRs compiled 9 sector-specific reports that provide relevant answers to all-four research questions, but specifically reporting on the potential of the economic sectors to grow and generate more and better jobs for young boys and girls in the different regions of Albania. In addition, the CRT conducted literature review and in-depth interviews with key informants to inform the sector selection process.

Fifteen indicators were used to conduct a comparative analysis among the shortlisted sectors based on the information and conclusions provided by the sector researchers/experts:

1. Contribution to GDP
2. Contribution to real GDP growth
3. Real GDP growth by economic sector
4. Overall employment
5. Youth employment
6. Women employment
7. Vulnerable groups' employment
8. Potential to create more jobs – mainly for young people
9. Decency of jobs in the sector
10. Presence of vulnerable/informal/ non-salary jobs
11. Need for skill upgrading
12. Potential for innovation in production/processing/service provision
13. Potential of the sector to develop and utilize smart solutions
14. Green economy sectors
15. Government priority

A scoring system from 0 to 5 (in one case with negative values) was used to compare the sectors, with exception to indicator 15 (Government Priority), in which case Government's priority sectors (as defined in the Governance Programme approved by the Parliament) were all given 1 point when relevant. Different weights were given to different indicators (varying from 0.6 to 1.6) according to their relevance to the project.

From the comparative analysis, the following sectors ranked the best and were selected, in consultation with the MoSWY and SDC:

- Tourism and Hospitality (with focus on Hospitality, Agro-Tourism, Cultural Heritage)
- Information and Communication Technology (with focus on information technology system solutions [software and hardware] and data collection and processing)

Ilia Kristo (PhD) for Tourism and Hospitality; Mimoza Agolli (PhD(c)) for Transportation; Rigers Bakiu (PhD) for Aquaculture; Blendi Gërdoçi (PhD) for Agriculture; Prof. Mimoza Kasimati (PhD) for Construction; Ana Ktona (PhD) and Alban Karapici for ICT.

- Textiles (with focus on high value chain segments/process)
- Construction (with focus on energy/ resource efficiency buildings)

The project team decided to consider ICT as a crosscutting theme for the purpose of designing the projects' interventions and not as a sector to focus on only. ICT will affect every profession –from the waiter with ordering the drinks to the installer of the sensors in an energy-efficient building and on to the process operator in textile working with CAD/CAM. For this reason, it is necessary for the project team to see how this potential develops in the near future, as the intention is to advance Albania's economy perspective. This requires to be translated in the different curricula: from the blackboard where students get information about homework to the beginning of introducing out-of-school learning.

Selection of Region

A consultation process was conducted with MoSWY and SDC to define the best approach for the definition of the regions to be covered by the project. It was agreed that the project should intervene at regional level (Qark) and in territories where there is a pressing need for occupational reform besides the potential for more and better jobs for young boys and girls. Based on donor coordination principles, some regions where excluded to ensure there are no overlapping with other donors currently operating in VET system support. The CRT analyzed the 5 shortlisted regions in terms of the potential for the selected economy sectors to grow and generate jobs for young people. As a result, and in consultation with MoSWY and SDC, the qarks of Vlora and Lezha were selected as areas of primary focus, and the qark of Berat as area for selected activities focusing on replicability assessment.

Selection of Providers

For the first project phase (until end of Feb 2019), the project follows a regional approach. The project will cover public and private VSD providers as well as the private sector in the region. In the qark of Vlora, the project activities will focus on a rather narrowly-defined Vlora Region, since other donors (namely Austrian Development Agency - ADA) will support VET providers in the Municipality of Saranda. The qark of Berat will benefit from replicability assessments and be involved in selected project activities, i.e, school management support and training of trainer (ToT) activities.

The following public schools and training centers are central actors and cooperation partners of the S4J project in these regions:

1. Lezha: Kolin Gjoka School
2. Vlora: "Pavaresia" Industrial School
3. Vlora: Commercial School
4. Vlora: Vocational Training Center
5. Berat: Kristo Isak School

The regional approach is understood as a pilot phase models and other important results developed locally / regionally under project conditions shall be ready for rolling out and scaling-up on national level in a potential second phase. The project will prepare ground for making this reality, applying a systemic perspective and working with systems actors, Albanian-based actors, related projects and donors from the very beginning onwards (see respective chapter). Therefore, certain

activities will already touch the national level (such as ToT institutionalization, developing capacities for school management support, curricula revision or development, or specific ICT solutions that will be designed for nation-wide absorption) in order to prepare ground for system-effects, but also because in the centralized Albanian VSD system the national level is important in many dimensions.

Section 2. VET Policies in Albania and Institutional Framework

VET is currently a national priority.[11] The reformation of this system started in 2012, with the ultimate goal of coordinating policies on employment, vocational education and vocational training (VT). National Employment and Skills Strategy 2014-2020 is the strategic document harmonizing these policies and as of 2013, the Ministry of Social Welfare and Youth and its subordinate institutions are in charge to implement it. NESS 2014-2020 strategic priorities are:

A. Foster decent job opportunities through effective labor market policies;

B. Offer quality vocational education and training to youth and adults;

C. Promote social inclusion and territorial cohesion;

D. Strengthen the governance of the labor market and qualification systems.

Currently, VET system in Albania is underperforming in terms of the ultimate goal of graduates' employment. In the country, only 30% of vocational students from VE get a job after graduation (GIZ/ETF, 2014), and 3.5% of trainees are employed after training (NES, 2015), considerably lower compared with EU27+ countries where 63.4% of VET graduates are employed (CEDEFOP, 2012). The VET system upgrade is addressing the renovation of providers' infrastructure, teacher/instructor training, increase enrollment (especially of vulnerable groups, e.g., Roma and Egyptians, etc.), increase the percentage of VET graduates, foster collaboration with the private sector in institutionalization of work-based learning, revise and guide the curricula toward labor market, and increase the VET providers' autonomy.

MoSWY midterm plan, as revealed by high officials of the Ministry, is to rationalize the VET providers' network to around 13 providers called "schools of excellence", institutions with a higher status of autonomy, offering a higher variety of VE programs and short-term courses as well. Donors' support is considered crucial in this approach by offering financial and technical assistance at providers' level. The reform opts to integrate provision of VE and VT in the rationalized VET providers' network, aiming efficient use of resources and effectiveness in terms of VET serving to national and local labor market and social needs.

A new VET draft law was prepared[12] to envisage the vision for the comprehensive VET system since the current VET law[13]

11 Program of the Government of Albania 2013-2017, p.33, http://www.akti.gov.al/dokumenta/programi_qeverise_2013_2017.pdf

12 The VET Law has been drafted the assistance of ETF, GIZ, ILO and representatives of other stakeholders.

13 Law No. 8872, dated 29.03.2002, "On Vocational

has not fully captured the dynamics of VET developments in Albania in the recent years and EU policy orientations and instruments. Certain elements of VE and VT are currently regulated by different laws, which have created overlapping competences or contradictions in some aspects and 'empty spaces' in others. This draft law is still under discussion at MoSWY and important issues, especially on the VET system governance and vocational education structures, are yet to be decided.

VET System Governance

MoSWY is the highest-level institution responsible for VET in the country. A VET Directorate operates under the General Directorate of VET Employment and Migration. In principle, MoSWY designs VET policies and operates in a strategic level, but as of 2014, MoSWY is also responsible for the administration of vocational schools. Shifting responsibilities to MoSWY from Ministry of Education and Sport (MoES), which used to be fully in charge for vocational education till 2013, is still going on, and the results are not that tangible as expected, due to the complexity of the integration of full responsibilities within MoSWY, previously and prolonged low performing VET, lack of institutional capacities, limited resources, and VET staff turnover across the system. The National Labor Council and National VET Council are tripartite committees feeding MoSWY with policy recommendations in VET and employment. Still, their role seems to be formal, if one refers to historical inputs, rather missing from these committees.

MoES is sharing responsibilities with MoSWY on VE, being responsible for the general education part of VE, in terms of: general subjects' curricula, teacher occupational standards: additionally, MoES administers the State Matura.

National Agency on Vocational Education, Training and Qualifications (NAVETQ) is another MoSWY subordinate institution (previously under MoES) responsible for development of qualifications and professions (list, standards and description) in close collaboration with employers; VET curricula and VET quality assurance. The VET teacher/instructor training function has been lately assigned to the Agency, though the relevant legal framework is missing. To support NAVETQ activity and ensure a better participation of the private sector, with the initiative of the SDC-funded RISI Albania Project, sectorial skill committees are expected to be created in each sector, with a wide participation of employers and private sector, aiming to offer a realistic picture of skill needs in each sector, occupational profiles and required qualifications to fill these gaps.

National Employment Service is MoSWY's subordinate institution responsible for implementing employment policies, gathering information on labor market needs, and coordinating regional labor offices. With regard to VET, NES is responsible for administering public VTCs and approving the license to private VT providers. Employment Offices operate under NES and, distributed in each region, support with information on vacancies in labor market, intermediate employment, and offer career and profession orientation mainly for job seekers.

Formal VET providers in Albania are vocational schools (VS), which offer vocational education programs, and vocational training centers offering vocational training through

Education and Training in the Republic of Albania", amended by Law No. 10011 dated 30.10.2008, Law No. 10434, dated 23.06.2011, and Law No. 63/2014, dated 26.06.2014

short-term courses (3 months up to 1 year).

International actors have played a crucial role in all dimensions of VET system development, starting from policy recommendations and contribution in strategic orientation, to interventions at the VET providers' level. Their financial support has been indispensable for the Albanian underfunded VET system. International actors continue to contribute also by introducing successful VET models adjusted to the Albanian context. Introducing the German speaking countries' dual-system in the Albanian VET system is in the agenda of the government[14]. However, this approach is considered quite optimistic for the Albanian reality where the private sector is reluctant toward VET and is dominated by small and medium enterprises. In the frame of "Apprenticeship Schemes for Youth Employability in Albania", NAVETQ is implementing an ERASMUS+-funded project. In the frame of this sector, a roadmap to the Albanian work-based learning model with elements of dual system is being introduced for tourism sector. Further details on VET donors and implementing agencies is provided in Annex 2.

Section 3. Modalities of VET Provision

Currently, vocational qualifications in Albania can be acquired by attending vocational education programmes or vocational training courses, or applying for recognition of learning acquired abroad.[15] Recognition of informal and non-formal prior learning is not yet developed[16].

There are 52 public VET providers in Albania, out of which 42 offering vocational education programs and 10 training centers offering short-term vocational courses, are spread in almost all regions, with a higher concentration in central Albania. Although there is need and opportunities for VSs to offer short-term courses, for the time being, only Kamza Multi-Functional Centre (MFC) is currently doing this due its special legal status as a pilot multifunctional center. The MoSWY vision, as expressed in the new VET law, foresees that all VSs will have the opportunity to provide short-term courses. Nine public VTCs are located in major cities (Shkodra, Tirana (2), Durres, Elbasan, Fieri, Vlora, Korça, Gjirokaster), and one mobile VTC is dedicated to northeast Albania.

According to MoSWY statistics, in academic year 2014-2015, a total of 17339 students were enrolled in full time VE. There are a total of 44 professional directions (Drejtime), divided in a total of 110 profiles offered in the public system (Nano, 2015). Some 17 VSs were offering a total of 13 professional directions on part-time basis for 3,654 students (in academic year 2014-2015). The main target for this modality includes adults working and interested to get a vocational qualification. Theoretical subjects are taken in the institution, while practice is mainly developed at the student's place of work. Since 2014, enrollment in first year of part-time VE programs is temporarily suspended given poor implementation and the need to design a proper system for this

14 Program of the Government of Albania 2013-2017, p.33

15 NAVETQ is currently responsible for recognition of learning acquired abroad, although the procedures are yet not formalized.

16 Although has been piloted in textile sector with the assistance of IPA-ILO 2010 Project on Human Resources Development in Albania

modality of provision, a finding supported in previous studies as well (GIZ/ETF, 2014).

Regarding vocational training, a total of 13,102 trainees were certified after successfully completing short-term training courses in public centers during 2014, 47% more compared with 2013. Last year, these centers shifted the focus to short-term courses offered to the unemployed (62% of certified), to whom the training courses are provided for free. Other deprived categories benefit from free training courses such as Roma, Egyptians, orphans, trafficked women, disabled, ex prisoned, returned migrants), but the number is limited (170 in total or 1.3% of trainees in 2014) (NES, 2015).

While VTCs are rather homogenous in their offer and vary mainly by trainees' number, there is a high variety among VSs regarding the number of students enrolled and professional directions offered. There are the so-called (i) industrial schools, offering technical profiles, such as electro-technics, mechanics, car services, thermos-hydraulics, ICT; (ii) light industry schools, offering textile-clothing, tourism, food industry, economy and business; (iii) agricultural schools, offering agriculture and other related profiles such as agro-food, agro-business, veterinary, etc. The Multi-functional Center of Kamza is the only one offering 9 various professional directions and short-term courses. Only two VSs are offering just one profile, ICT. In two VSs, foreign languages are being offered as a special profile. Public VSs have a high variety also in terms of performance, with the biggest ones assisted by donors, being in advantage (GIZ/ETF, 2014). As of 2014, the MoSWY is carrying out a VET network rationalization, which consists in transferring the offer to better/highly performing VS-s, or closing, some underperforming profiles or institutions.[17]

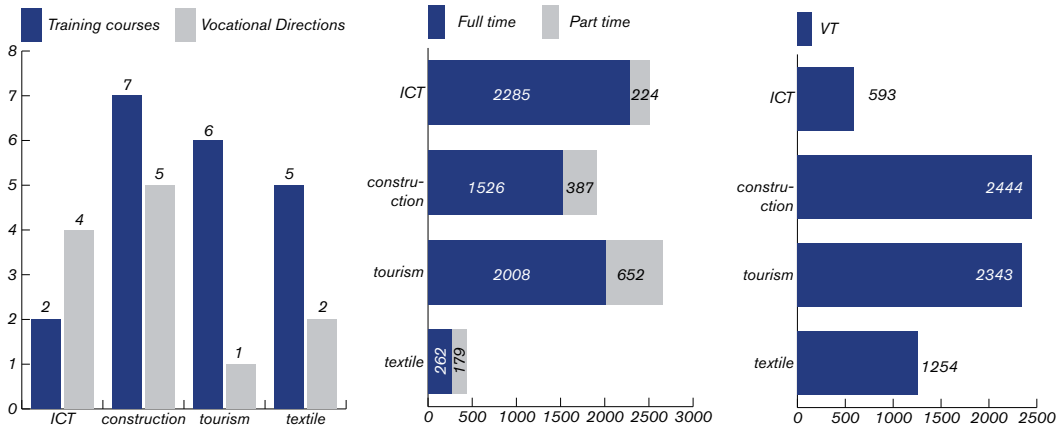
17 This process began in Shkodra region in 2014-2015. Zija Buliqi School, offering veterinary profile in Shkodra, was transferred to Ndre Mjeda Agriculture School in Bushat, with the medium term of merging the offer and becoming one provider. Kol Idromeno's construction-related profiles were transferred to Arben Broci School. In the academic year 2015-2016, 7 providers, operating as joint schools (the same institution is offering general education and VE programs) did not enroll first-year students on vocational education programs, leading to gradual termination of these programs.

VET Offer in Selected Sectors

Economic sector analysis revealed that there are a total of 12 professional directions, 29 profiles and 20 short-term courses preparing qualified employees for occupational profiles in ICT, construction, tourism, and textile sectors. As can be noticed, economic sectors vary by the number of respective VE directions, profiles and training courses offered by the formal public VET system. Female representation in vocational education is generally low.

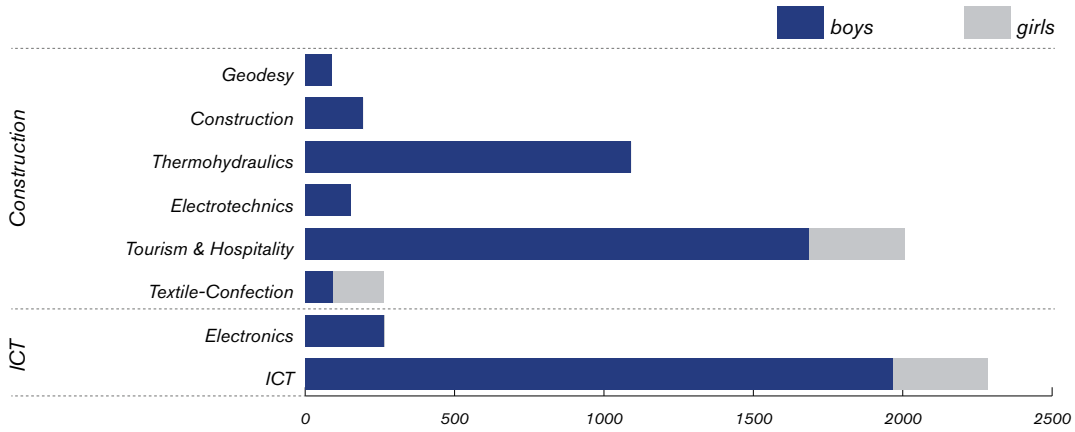
VE offer for tourism sector is limited to one professional direction, tourism and hospitality, with high enrollment. It is available at 10 providers in Tirana, Durres, Shkoder, Elbasan, Vlora, Berat and Korça region with 2,660 students enrolled. Six different vocational training courses are offered for this sector: bartender, waiter, cook, tourist operator, pastry, and receptionist for a total of 2,343 trainees. Cooking is the most requested training course and is available at almost all VTCs.

Graph 1: VET programs and enrollment serving to selected economic sectors



Source: MoSWY 2015 statistics

Graph 2: Enrolment in fulltime vocational education programs

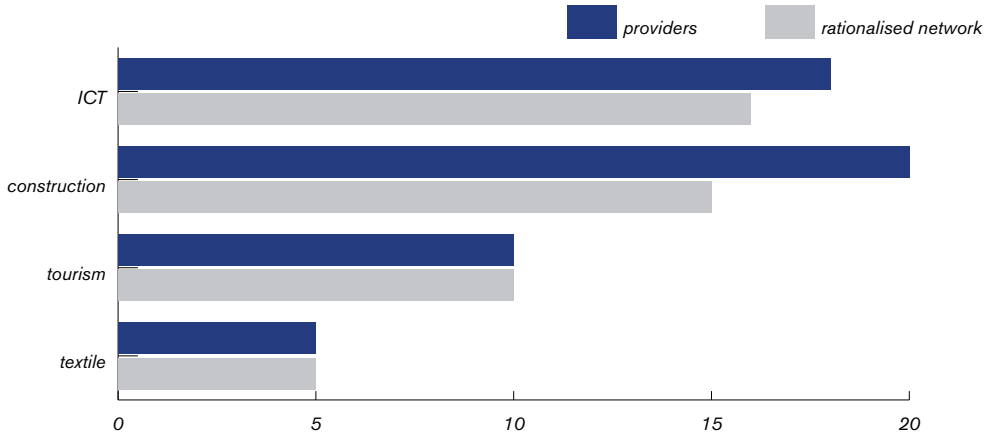


Source: MoSWY 2015 statistics

For textile sector, textile-garment direction represents Vocational Skill Development (VSD) for medium level technicians, offered as national and pilot curricula in 5 providers in Tirana, Shkodra, Durres, Korça and Elbasan, enrolling 441 students in total. The number of trainees in sector-related courses is 1254, higher than the number of students. Tailoring is the most requested course offered in almost all VTCs. In Shkodra and Mobile VTC, mechanized footwear sewing course is provided.

Construction sector is accommodating a higher number of VE directions, such as construction, geodesy, thermo-hydraulics, thermo-hydraulic installations (pilot), and electro-technics, offered currently in 20

Graph 3: Providers' network



providers across Albania to 1,913 students. It has a wider offer of short training courses. Almost 2,444 trainees are trained during 2015 in construction-related short-term courses and plumbing, solar panel installation and electrician are the most preferred.

ICT, as a special and crosscutting sector, is accommodating graduates of electronics and ICT directions offered in 18 providers in every region of the country with formal VE provision. As per MoSWY statistics for 2015, 2509 students are enrolled in these directions and the trend is increasing, especially in ICT, which is not a traditional professional direction, but was opened massively six academic years ago, mostly in VE schools offering electro-technics in accordance with the Government's priority given to ICT.

Comparing the actual and expected number of VE providers serving to each economic sector after rationalization, it can be noticed that construction and ICT will have a more limited offer in terms of providers and geographical dispersion. Providers where the VE offer is being transferred to or closed are located in semi-rural areas and small cities. As a result, the sector of agriculture will "suffer" it more. Textile and tourism profiles will not be impacted by the rationalization.

Section 4. Access to VET

4.1 Perceptions on VET as an Option for Skill Development in Albania

Increasing VET enrollment has been one of the main objectives in all VET strategies. In NESS (2014-2020), the objective (under priority B) is to increase enrollment of boys and girls in VET by up to 25%. Recent data indicate that VET enrollment has improved in the last years. Official data for academic year 2014-2015 show that a total of 22,801 students attended vocational education in both public and non-public VE schools, approximately 16.3% of the total number

of students enrolled in secondary education (MoSWY, 2015).

Despite promising data on enrollment, many VSs are facing the problem of overcrowding. The number of students per class has increased and teachers, classes, equipment and workshops are not sufficient. Latest statistics on private VE in 2014-2015 show there are 9 VE schools and 1,369 students enrolled. In general, information on private providers is limited. Harry Fultz, Shën Jozefi Punetor, Peter Maringer, Frymë Dashurie, Don Bosco and Ekonomisti are the non-public VE schools with the highest number of students (Nano, 2015).

However, these enrollment levels are still far from the average VE enrollment in OECD countries (with an average of 34%) (OECD, 2013)[18]. In our research, we use primary quantitative and qualitative data collected and analyzed with the purpose of understanding issues of attractiveness, access and equal opportunities, which could explain or help understand why the current picture of VET in the country is yet not a very optimistic one. Our findings present a combination of factors that contribute to (often) negative prejudice and attitudes towards VET, ranging from discouraging facts and figures, prejudice and stereotypes on VET to (sometimes) counterproductive publicity of VET offer.

There exists a strong stereotype across gender- and age-groups, regions and sectors that VET is a 'second-hand' education alternative. As a result, VET is rarely a first choice, unless the young person is either performing poorly in school and cannot make it to and/or advance in the general education alternative, or cannot afford to aim the other (optimal) path for skills development, namely the university education.

According to qualitative data, the poor reputation of VET is reported to be (un) intentionally reinforced by different actors. The way VET is advertised by governmental programs and structures, secondary schools, etc., reinforces certain stereotypes among youth and their families that VET is for 'poorly performing', 'problematic' students. On the contrary, if you love school, going to VET is considered 'weird' or 'irrelevant' option in a context where university degrees, such as bachelors and masters, have inflated the competition levels in the Albanian labor market.

Stereotypes and their reinforcement by different mechanisms often feed to an outcome of discouraging facts and figures related to VET. In comparative terms to general high schools in the country, VSs are characterized by a domination of students of below average academic performance. Likewise, curricula and staff are rated as significantly better in general high schools as compared to those of VSs who, on the other hand, are considered narrow and poor also by the participants in the qualitative component of this study. Also, in terms of employability and mid- or long-term objectives young people have for their future professional careers, VET is considered to have only one advantage – early potential entry to the labor market. However, the disadvantages outnumber this advantage. VET usually leads to jobs, which are not well-paid, are insecure, dominated by informality, or that lead to self-employment and all related challenges.

Finally, VET is not attractive to young people, as VET providers offer little or no socio-cultural life for their students. Gender segregation is very strong in VET, which often leads to even poorer and less

18 For more details see http://www.oecd.org/education/skills-beyond-school/EDIF%202013--N17%20(eng)pdf.pdf

stimulating environments for teenagers. In the following sections, we return to each of these perspectives shared by pre- and post-VET youth through in-depth interviews and focus-groups with what primary quantitative data collected from current VET students, teachers, trainees and instructors show.

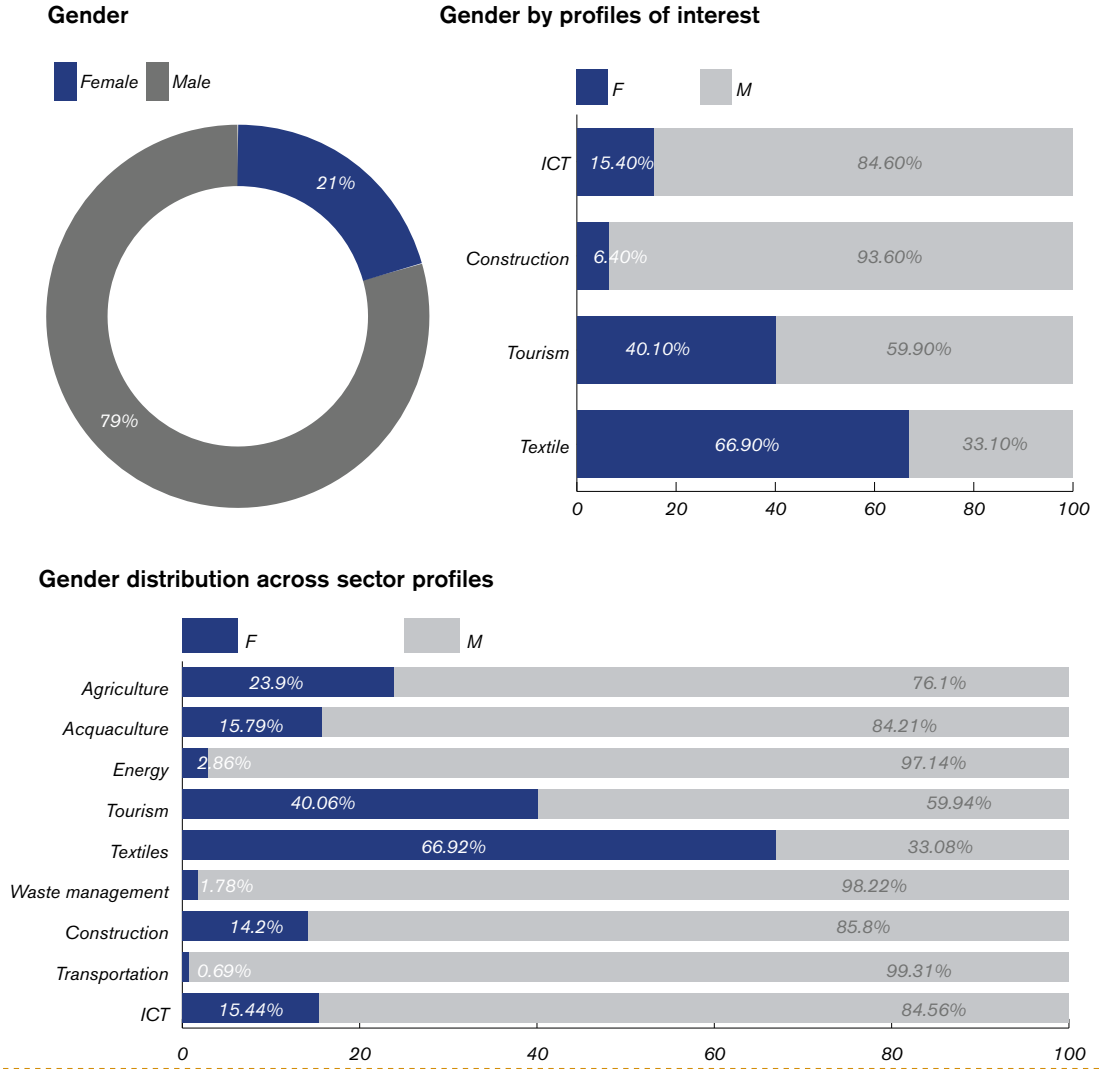
4.2 Who Ends Up in VET and How?

4.2.1. A Socio-Economic Profile of VET Students

Gender

In a context where perception on VET among youth and general public range between

Graph 4. Gender and VET in Albania: A cross-profile distribution.



those presented in the previous section, it is legitimate to explore also on how it all turns out to influence the profile of who attends VET in Albania. In a nutshell, our primary quantitative data show that VET is mainly a "mainstream, rural, man's world". The vast majority of VET students are males. This is true across all sectors with the exception of textiles profiles where women are a majority.

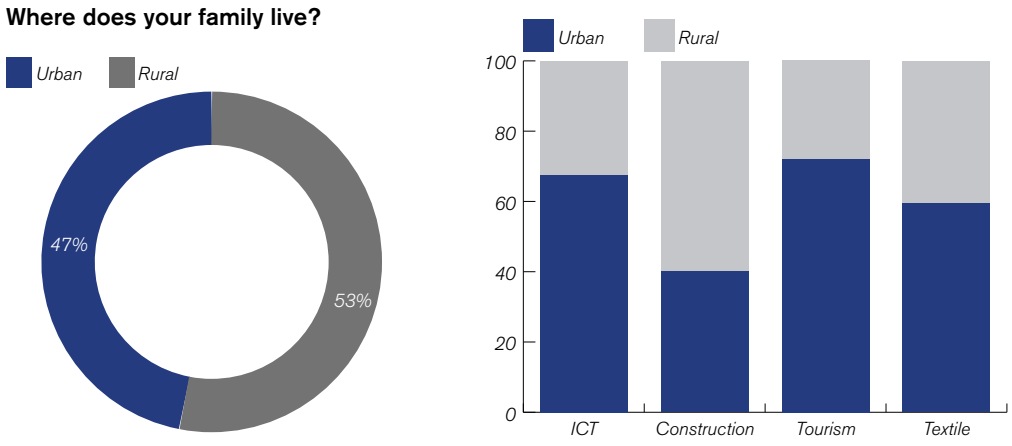
Our findings confirm what previous research in the area has found. In a baseline study of 2014 (GIZ/ETF, 2014), a male learner's dominance in VET was found both in VS and VTC (82% at VS and 61% at VTC). The share of female students at VS was only 18% and it was claimed that social structures of the VET provider, the segmentation of the labor market, and a range of other barriers to their participation (e.g. lacking qualifications, situational factors, and institutional barriers) were the main determinants (GIZ, 2014).

Location

In 2014, over 55% of students came from rural areas (GIZ/ETF, 2014), but school composition varied significantly by its location. Students mainly choose a nearby school. If the school is located in rural area, most of the students are from rural areas[19].

Although our figures do not fully support the rural profile perceived for VET students, as currently only 47% of our sample of respondents had their families (still) living in a rural area, the strong perception is related to what qualitative data help in having a deeper understanding. Even within the 53% of the urban families from where the rest of the students report to come from, a critical mass are believed to be families that are only recently migrating from rural to urban areas and/or families that live in periurban areas of large cities. In addition, several schools and profiles (like agriculture, energy,

Graph 5. VET students and urban/rural division

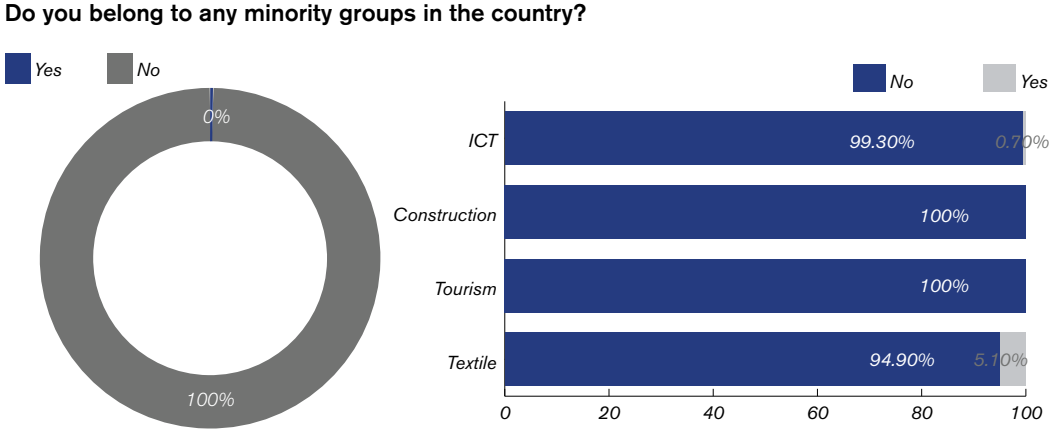


19 For example, it was found that in the Beqir Çela VE School, which is located in the suburbs of Durres, 60% of the students are from the rural areas, while in the Technical Economic School, located in Tirana downtown, 82% of students are coming from the city (Xhumari, Dibra, 2013).

etc.) are also reinforcing this image of the VET offer by being highly dominated by boys coming from rural areas.

academic readiness (inherited form different levels of skills and knowledge from the previous education system they attended).

Graph 6. VET and inclusion of minorities



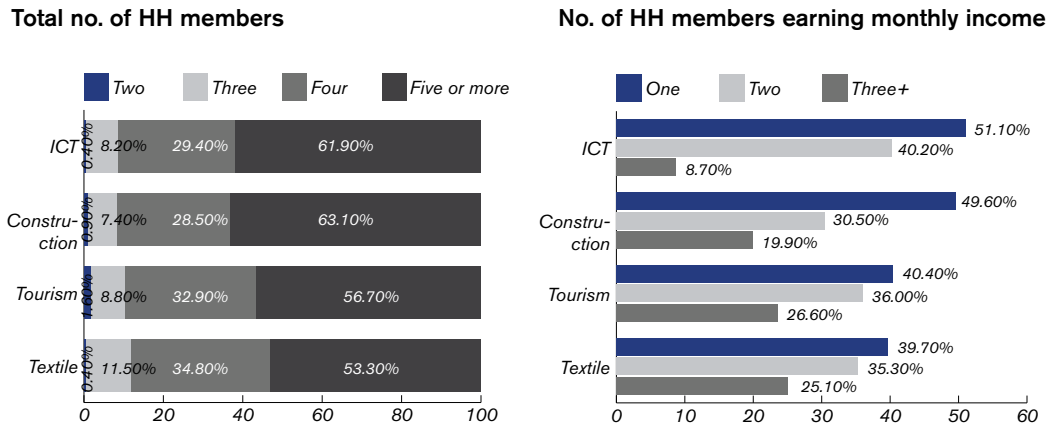
VET and Minorities

VET does not result to be inclusive of minorities either. Overall, results from our survey show that minorities are almost out of the Albanian VET picture. Only in textiles, agriculture and ICT there are some traces of students from minority groups. Further explorations with a focus on minorities might help in understanding more on the reasons behind these figures. Part of the trend observed in ITC alone might be due to the special policy applied for Roma community youth, for whom the average grade criterion does not apply, as explained from key-informant interviews. Although such policy has slightly increased the enrollment of Roma youth in the ICT profile, it has not been coupled by supportive measured that would help in addressing the gap in students' level

Family Background of VET Students

Family status of the students attending VET is in general pictured as that of a vulnerable profile. In a research of 2013, Xhumari and Dibra found that in the schools they observed, only 29% of the students had both parents working, while for 46% of students mothers were unemployed (Xhumari and Dibra, 2013). Our data, too, demonstrate a gap between the numbers of household members earning monthly income versus the dominating large size household typology of the respondents. The majority of respondents across the four profiles live in large families ranging from 5 to 15 members. However, the vast majority reports only for 2 or 1 earner in the household.

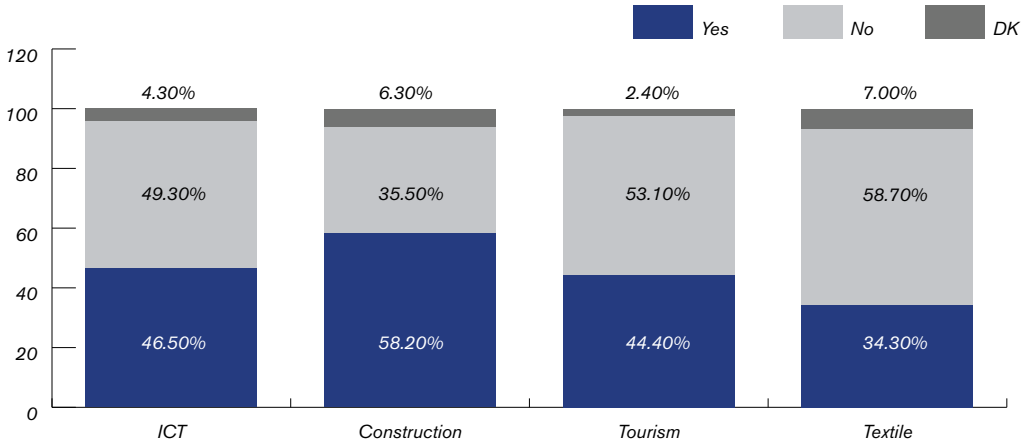
Graph 7. VET students and economic background of their families: Size of household (HH) vs. number of income earners per HH



Presence of other sources of income dominates among the construction profile students and is less reported among textile students. It could be argued that this might be closely related to the fact that majority of the students in construction profile came from rural areas (see data presented in previous section) meaning that land and migration are often alternative (but insecure) sources of income. In these settings, data may suggest a low living standard among VET students and their families.

Not only the economic status of most VET students' families is on average a fragile one, but they are also characterized by

Graph 8. Alternative sources of income for VET students' families

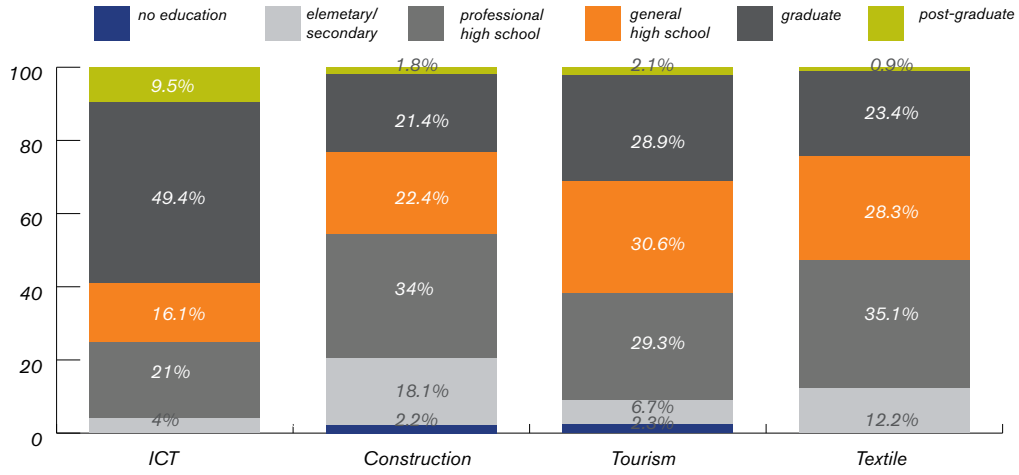


relatively poor education background, too. This, in part, might also explain some of the variation in the income situation pictured above. Xhumari and Dibra (2013) found that parents' education level varies based on region (parents of students in rural area schools are less educated), while we find that that such variation is significant also across sectors. As presented in the graph below, the only profile where students report in majority to have (at least) one family member with a graduate or post-graduate degree is ICT (58.90%); in all other three profiles, the opposite is observed. In construction, tourism and textile, in more than 70% of the cases, the most educated family member does not go beyond pre-university studies.

confirmed by official data and research results. VET students have on average low academic results. This is considered as a negative publicity for the system leading to be even less attractive for future well-performing students. Based on latest MoSWY (2015) data, VE students' average grade is 6.4 out of 10. Students enrolled in ICT have the highest average (above 8), followed by those in the economic and tourism-hospitality profiles.

In our survey, we explore on the current trends of students performance for the enrolled students of the academic year 2015-16. In general, VET profiles (including ICT) are not very attractive to best-performing students.

Graph 9. Reported level of most-educated HH member in VET students' HH

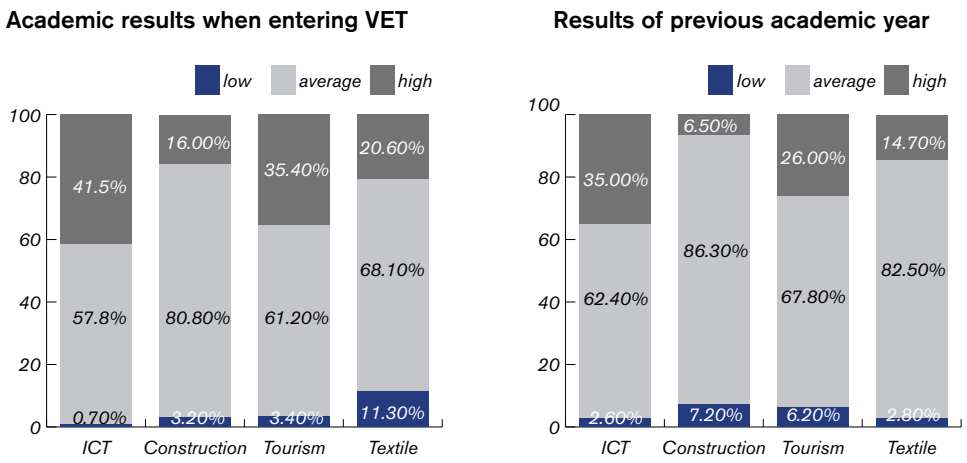


4.2.2. Quality of VET Students

In line with a general perception that VET is for 'poor performing' students, evidence show that this holds true and is also

In particular, construction and textiles are the least preferred as the specific weight of poorly performing students is higher. What is even more striking is a deterioration of academic performance even when enrolled in the system. Unlike the anecdotal belief that VET is easier than general high school

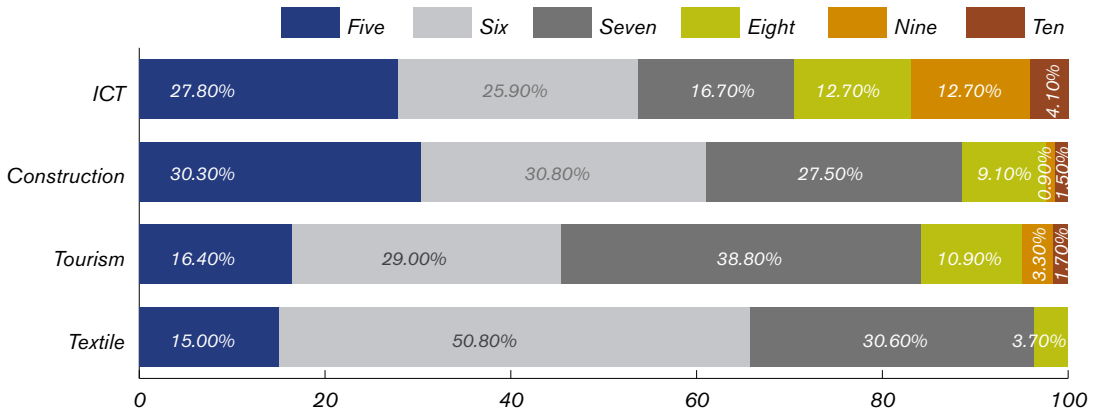
Graph 10. VET students and their academic performance



to get good marks, the shrinking of highly performing students group across all profiles confirms the opposite. The graph on the previous academic year results shows that construction and tourism are the two profiles suffering the most from the decrease in the academic performance of students.

Further looking within the academic performance of current students, the trends are also supported by variation in academic performance in math. Students with high grades (9 or 10) in math are totally absent in textile and only a minority in the other three profiles led by ICT with 4.10% of the students with a ten and 12.7% with a nine in math as for the previous academic year.

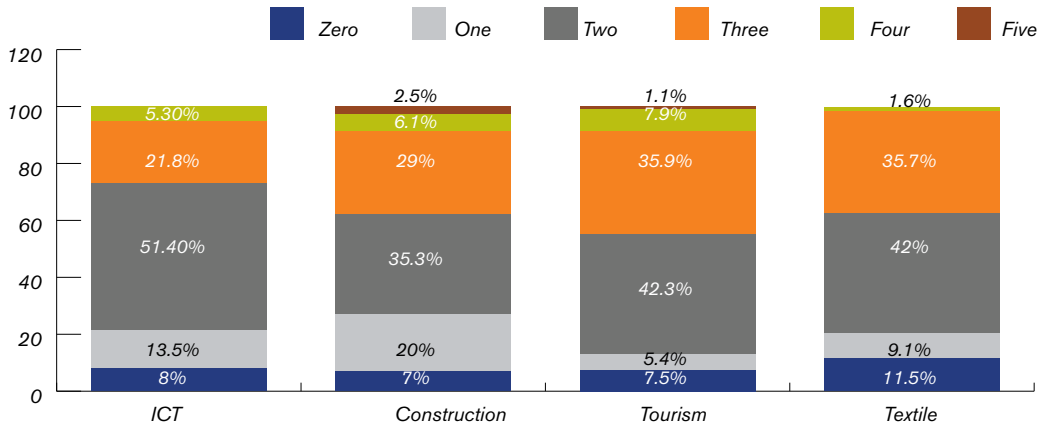
Graph 11. Academic performance in math (previous year grade)



It is argued that, to properly investigate on the issue of VET from an economic and social perspective, VET has to be seen as part of a whole life cycle process of skill formation, which starts in the womb and ends in the grave (Piedro et.al. 2010). Investments on skill formation need to start early in life. Various works on skill formation show that the economic returns to skill investment are largest in early childhood and decline over the lifecycle (Carneiro and Heckman, 2003). However, investing in skill formation (both cognitive and non-cognitive) in early life is not enough. These investments also need to be followed up by further investment in skills, or there is a strong risk that individuals will not be able to fulfill their potential. This is particularly relevant for individuals from poorer socio-economic backgrounds, who not only tend to start with lower levels of investment but then also have access to poorer quality schools and thus experience less subsequent investment (Piedro et. al. 2010). These literature highlights are relevant to the profile of VET students in our survey. Trends of poor investment in early education can be seen since the years of early childhood of our respondents.

As shown in the Graph 12, majority of our respondents spent 2 years or less in a pre-school institution. In addition, in all four sectors, more that 7% have never been in a pre-school setting before entering the compulsory education system. Textile, sharing the largest portion of those with poor academic performance, is also home to a larger share of students with no pre-school experience (11.5% of the respondents in textile). This overall trend might be loosely related to the rural origins of many of the VET students. Pre-school system is poor and less accessible in rural areas across the country.

Graph 12. Years spent in pre-school



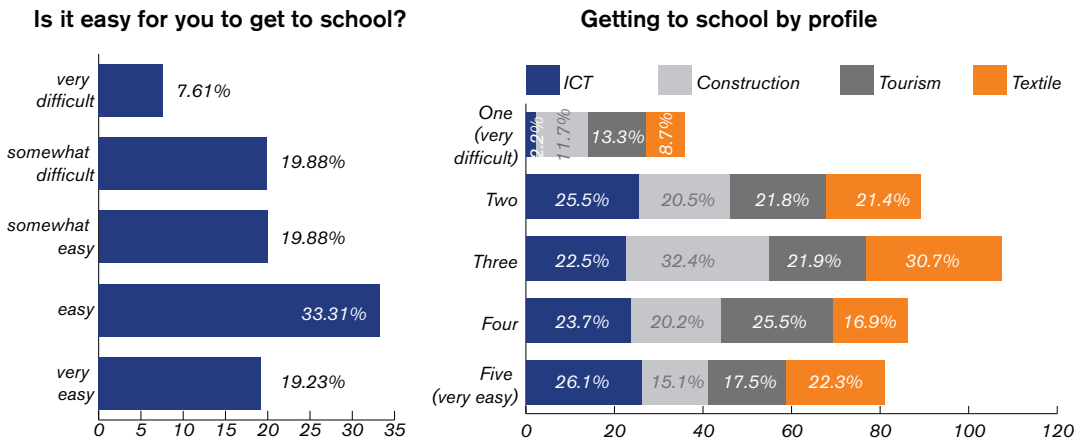
4.2.3. Physical Access

Pre-VET and pre-general high school youth attitudes towards issues of physical access to schools were explored in interviews and focus-group discussions. Although, school distance or facilities were not pointed out as an important determinant, when looking at trends pictured by the quantitative data from VET enrolled students, certain differences can me noted from one profile to the other. Overall, accessing VET facilities is not that easy for a good portion of the respondents. Students in ICT seem to have an easier access to the school facility, while more difficulties are faced among energy, tourism and construction students. Especially among students of construction profile, the school distance and getting to school appear to be issues of concern. Here we also recall the fact that it is this profile in which most of the students come from rural areas, hence more distant to the VET providers' premises.

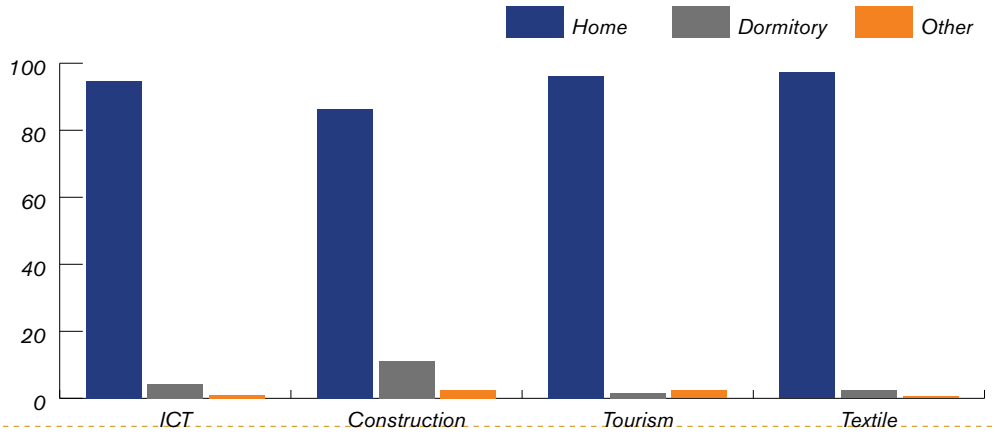
Access to school is a result of the distance from the provider and the opportunity to be accommodated in dormitories when needed. In general, all VE students living in 5 km or more distance from school are offered the opportunity to be accommodated in 23 dormitories spread all over the country. However, not all VSs have the possibility to accommodate their students in dormitories. Approximately 9% of VE students live in dorms. Although VE enrollment has increased and more than 55% of students come from rural areas (i.e., they are eligible to live in the dormitories according to established criteria), the number of students choosing to stay in the dorm has dropped. This is mainly due to poor conditions of public dormitories, leading to an increased number of students who choose to stay in private dorms, rented houses or stay with relatives living in the city (Dibra, 2015).

However, our primary data confirm that living with the family is the most dominant option regardless of the reported distance/ difficulties to get to school. Only in construction there is a critical mass of students who report to be currently living in dormitory. It is relevant to recall that also the majority in this profile are males. Other options, such as renting a house with friends or staying at relatives, are only sporadic.

Graph 13. Reported level of difficulty to access school among VET students



Graph 14. Where do you currently live?



4.2.4. Equal Opportunities and VET

Vulnerable Groups Enrollment in VET

In general, VE enrollment in the country is shaped, among other factors, by certain criteria and measures taken with the aim of busting enrollment rates such as: (i) enrollment criteria which in VE are limited to compulsory education; (ii) a scholarship scheme in place for students living more than 5 km from the VS, accommodated in dorms and coming from families with poor economic conditions, enrolled in a profile of a strategic importance to the economy and have high results, if resident in deprived area in north-east and south-east Albania, or if belonging to other specific vulnerable groups (students of the ex-political persecuted, disabled, orphans); (iii) enrollment campaigns organized by different schools in the country; (iv) VTCs training offered for free for vulnerable groups[20], including registered unemployed; and (v) social assistance for disabled[21] is doubled if following a VET program (see Xhumari and Dibra, 2013).

Other more recent data, such as those of GIZ/ETF (2014) baseline show that regarding access of people with disabilities, 50% of the VTCs reported to have special procedures for their admission. In some of the VTCs people with disabilities were said to be given priority in the enrollment

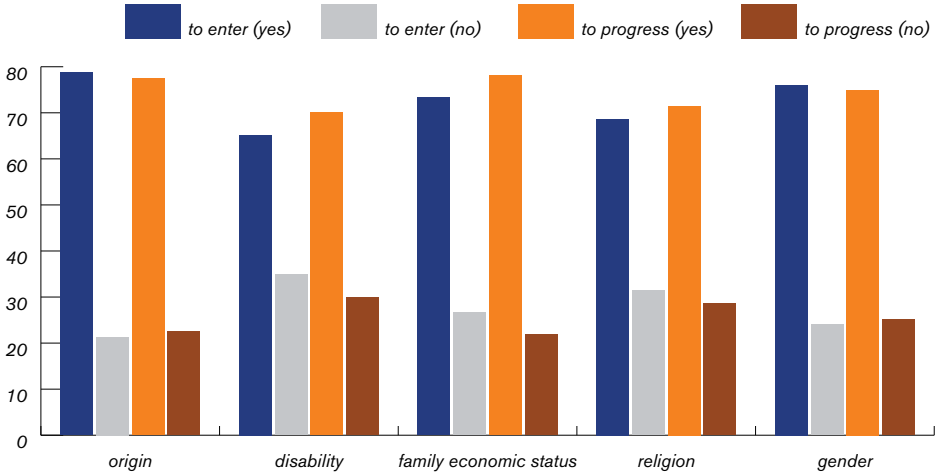
20 Although formally enrollment in the VET system is not allowed without finishing compulsory 9-years of education, there are cases of concessions to allow Roma to follow training courses. The main problem for the Roma education is the lack of elementary education, at least that of basic literacy skills. The Roma children are registered in training courses at VTC if they are 14-16 years old, with permission from the Labor Inspectorate. Good models of previous successful Roma girls (hairdresser) and boys (bread-maker) in Durres training program of UNDP have been promoted.

21 Access for disabled students in VET remains problematic. According to the School Inventory and Conditions' Survey - Albania 2011, "4.1% of school buildings in Albania are wheelchair accessible, 2.4% are accessible to the ground floor only. Only 1.7% of buildings have classrooms that are easily accessible without a ramp. Only 5% of school buildings in Albania have at least one toilet adapted for handicap use, most of these are in urban areas". Some of the schools are doing their best to accommodate disabled students in the existing infrastructure. The economic school, for example, is accommodating the physical disabled students in the first floors and dedicates one bathroom to them, even though neither of solutions meets EU standards (Xhumari, Dibra, 2013).

process. Selected VTCs also stated to cooperate with associations and/or to develop specific programs for this target group. In contrast, VSs seem to be less open for disabled students (only 10% of the VSSs have special procedures for the disabled). With regard to physical conditions, there are generally no provisions made to facilitate access for disabled persons to VET providers. Only the VSs that were newly built under the IPA 2008 project and the "Isuf Gjata" VS have ramps, facilitating the entry to buildings for wheelchairs. Assisted by Inclusive Education CoE Project, the latter has improved the social inclusion index through inclusive teaching methods, better

we found that not only half of the youth population (girls) in the country continues to be underrepresented but that minorities of any kind are yet almost absent in the system. Such observations are also backed by data revealing significant and sometimes surprising issue of equal opportunities in the sector, both in terms of opportunities to enter and progress within VET. Beyond the deep gender segregation by sectors and profiles as previously underlines, the system provides limited equal chances to enter and progress within the system. Equal opportunities are challenged by a variety of social indicators.

Graph 15. Does your school offer equal opportunities?



environment at school, and more possibility for extracurricular activities and is welcoming more students from disadvantaged groups. In this school, 8% of the students come from Roma and Egyptians community, 2% disabled, 5.6 orphans and 22% come from families with unemployed parents.

Regardless of these measures, when describing the overall profile of VET students,

Although the majority of participants in our survey do not report for a lack of equal opportunities within the VES they attend, among those that do, disability and region are perceived as the main basis for inequity in opportunities.

Further investigating for potential differences across sectors/profiles we find that the origin of the student is a stronger

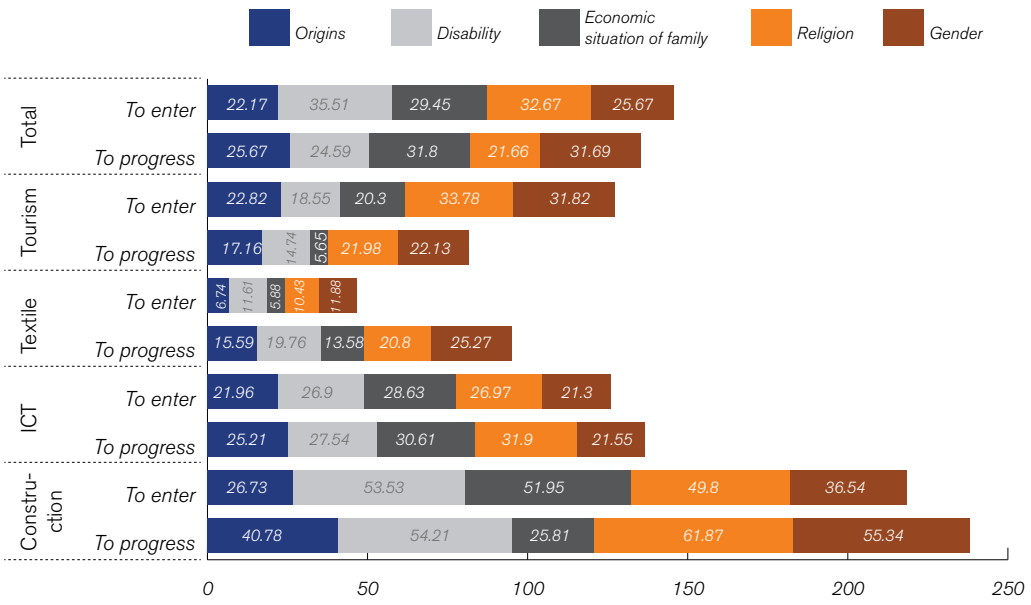
determinant in entering waste management profiles and progressing in construction. But entering construction profile is mostly hindered by disability. Disability can be a serious limitation in making progress within waste management and energy sectors' profiles, too.

Family economic situation is claimed to define more often the opportunities to enter construction and progress in energy profiles.

Religion, the second ranked basis for inequality in VET, scores higher in entering energy and waste management profiles as well as with regard to being able to progress with equal chances in the energy and construction ones. Last but not least, gender, although not a top ranked determinant for limiting equal opportunities (overall, it is the third most popular choice), makes opportunities differ in that respect in entering agriculture, tourism, waste management and construction profiles. Progressing in agriculture and construction profiles is also primarily linked with different opportunities based on gender differences.

Construction has a higher incidence with reference to all indicators. Further focusing on the 4 profiles of interest as well as on the subgroups of those declaring that their school does not offer equal opportunities, we compare trends between them and the overall scores of the total sample. Results are shown in the following graph.

Graph 16. Share of those who believe school does NOT offer equal opportunities based on:

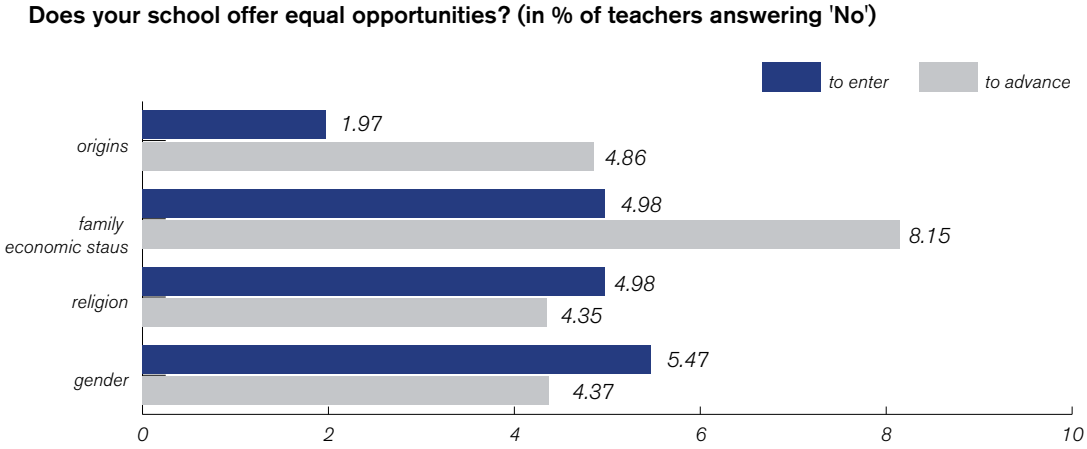


In ***Construction***, the strongest inhibitors to enter and progress are reported to be disability and economic situation of the family at entry. Disability remains a strongly

perceived inhibitor in progressing. However, religion takes the first place as a base for inequality in chances to progress in construction. In the ICT profile, economic situation and religion prevail, both at the entry point and in progressing when enrolled in the school. Gender becomes of primary importance only when considering Textile and Tourism. In both these profiles, gender is important as a base of inequality to enter and progress. Interestingly, religion persists as the second most important factor in textiles and tourism, too. While previous research has explored on inequalities based on gender, disability and economic situation, religion is for the first time identified as a strong determinant. Further research is much needed to understand more on why and how religion belongingness influences opportunities to enter and progress in VET.

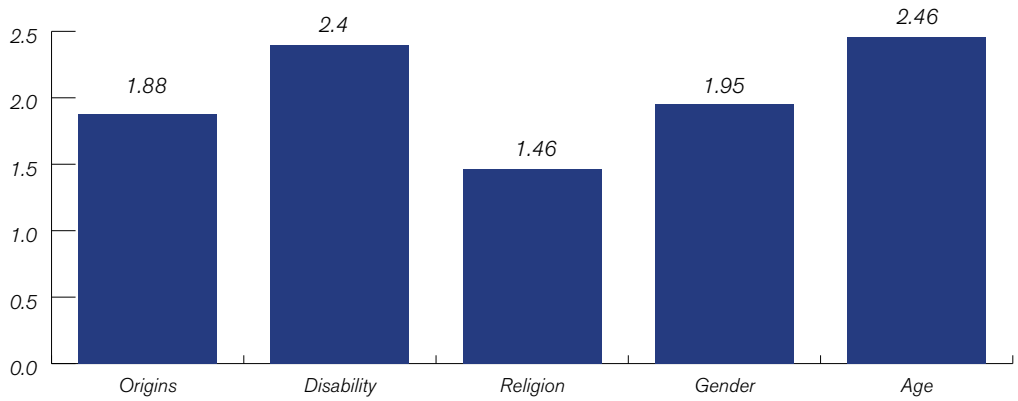
Issues of opportunities and discrimination in VET were addressed also from the perspective of teachers on the same providers. Among teachers who reported a lack of equal opportunities in their respective VES for students to enter and progress, gender was found to be a predominant reason for inequality at entering VET, whereas economic status is almost twice as important in jeopardizing equal chances of students to progress.

Graph 17. Teachers' perceptions on the lack of equal opportunities for students to enter and progress within VET providers



While age differences are small among students to constitute any bases for variation in opportunities offered, the situation of teachers differs. Asked about the frequency of witnessing any discrimination at the workplace (i.e., in the respective VS) involving students and/or teachers, teachers picture a slightly different situation. Among the most frequently witnessed situations of discrimination they report are age and disability related ones. Unlike for the students, religion comes last. Again, further explorations are necessary to go beyond this trend and understand such variations.

Graph 18. Ever witnessed cases of discrimination (in % of teachers who have "frequently" or "very frequently" witnessed)



Issues of inequality along with other socio-psychological problems of the students are expected to be addressed by the psycho-social school service. Every school should have a part-time school psychologist responsible to (at least) create the social map with social and economic data of all new entrants, but not all VSs benefit from this service. Even when they do, the number of students per psychologist (or social worker) is very high to be expecting any intensive/ individualized work when problems are identified.

4.2.5. Choosing VET – Choosing a Profession (Orientation)

Choosing VET as an education alternative is often rated as difficult also considering the fact that the decision is immediately related with choosing an orientation and a profession very early in life (when only 15). In this section, we explore on how young people choose VET and particularly the orientation once within the system.

In 2014, the distribution of students across full-time VET profiles varied as in the graph below, with automobile services being the most demanded profile (15%), followed by economics and business (13%), ICT (12%), and tourism and hospitality (11%) (GIZ/ ETF, 2014).

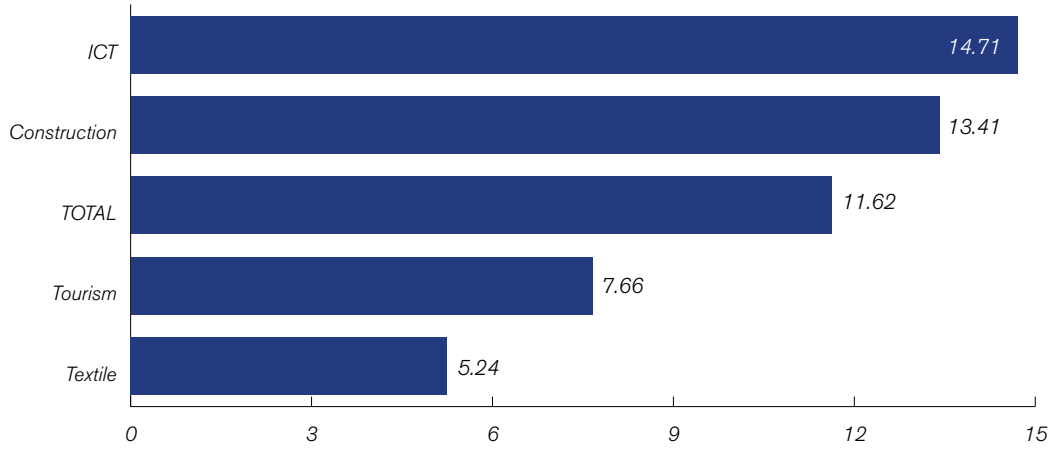
Vocational training is offered in 10 public vocational training centers operating in different regions of Albania and a large number of private training centers (340 licensed subjects and 30 operating as vocational training centers) offering short-term training courses (NESS 2014-2020). Trainees participating in short-term courses offered in public VTCs, show a misbalance between the vocational and the complementary courses (foreign languages and computer literacy), the latter accommodating 38% of the trainees in 2013 (22% follow the English language course). The short-term courses of electrical installations, thermo-hydraulic, garment (tailoring) and cooking comprise the second highest enrollment, with approximately 7% each (GIZ/ETF, 2014). Latest data on

trainees from VTCs show that in 2014, the number of trainees (13,102, out of which 45% females) increased by more than 47% compared with 2013 (NES). The information on non-public VTCs enrollment is missing.

Against these provisions and enrollments, we find that demand for VET among young students of the 9th grade remains very small and vague. In focus group discussions with different profiles of this age group it was confirmed that the guiding star orienting their choices for skills development and a career in Albania is the university. University is a must in the minds of many young boys and girls and especially in the minds of the grownups in their families (parents or siblings). The mere fact that general high school prepares you better and gives the opportunity to be rated with higher scores[22] to enter university makes VET automatically a less preferred option.

In the quantitative component of our study, we asked students if the current school they were enrolled was also their first choice. A total of 17.8% were following a program that they did not prefer as a first choice. The share of this category of students was much larger in textile. Almost one in three among textile students had a different first choice form the one they were currently enrolled.

Graph 19. Was this school your first choice? (in % of "No")



Such choices are not always a decision taken by the student. Overall, 11.6% of the participants reported that they were currently involved in a program someone else chose for them. This was more common among ICT students. Almost 15% of the ICT students included in our sample reported of being pushed into ICT.

22 In the Albanian university entry system, VET students get a lower entry coefficient as compared to general high school graduates which automatically lowers their chances to enter university and/or their preferred program.

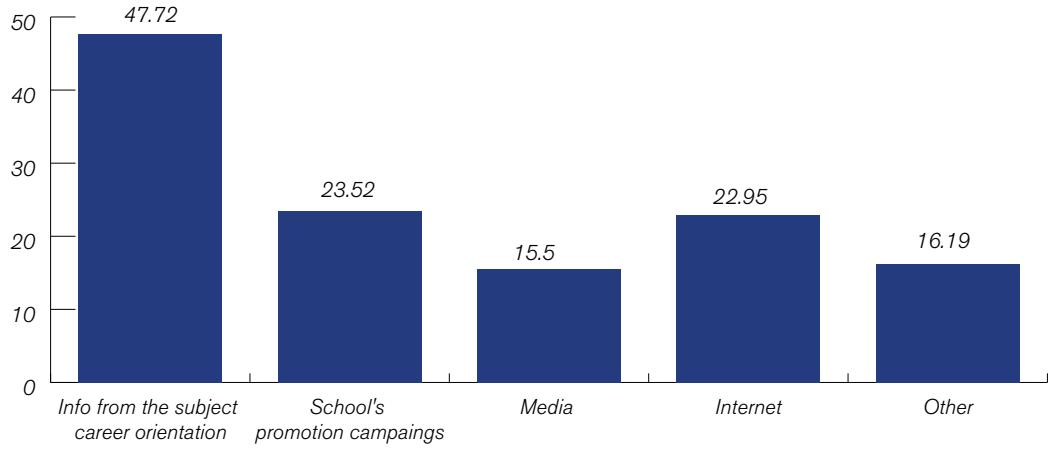
Data on trainees reveal a different reality. Unlike VET students, almost 97% of the trainees in VET have individually chosen the training course they were currently enrolled.

Difficulties or uncertainties in choosing and making a decision on their future education are related to weak/lack of professional orientation programs or/and services targeting this category of young people. Professional orientation is one of the weakest points in the chain of institutions and actors orienting and supporting young Albanians in choosing and progressing in VET. Overall, 82% of the respondents who are currently involved in VET had that same provider as their first choice and 89% of the respondents report to have been making the decision of attending VET themselves. Asked on what kind of sources they used to make the decision on which school to enter, they ranked first the subject of "Career orientation", part of the 9-years school curricula. Unfortunately, this reported main source is currently removed from the curricula. Interviews and FGD with pre high-school pupils confirmed that changes of the last years in the curricula had a direct impact in the total absence of this subject.

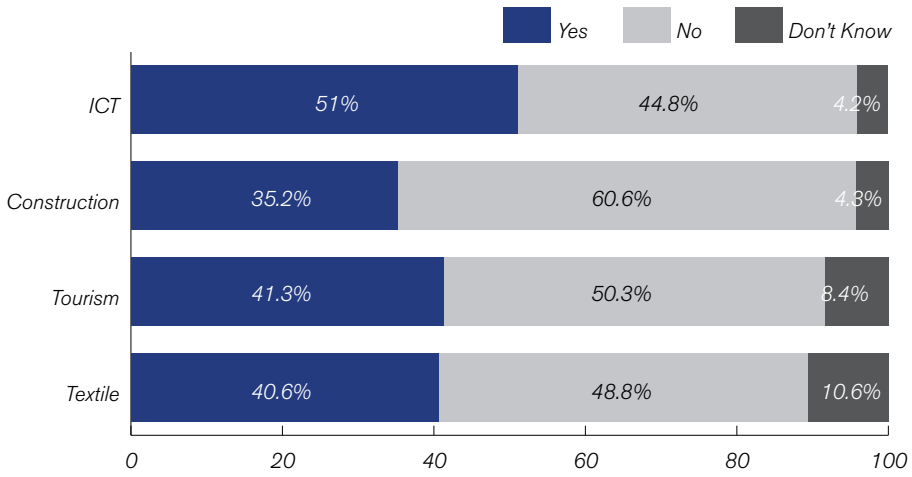
On the other hand, the main sources of information among trainees in learning about the center are friends and relatives (72%). The second most relevant source is reported to be the employment offices (26%), a factor exclusive of VET trainees and not relevant to VET students.

Although school's promotion programs and Internet are the other two most important sources of information, qualitative data helped us understand that the career of these young people is primarily influenced by their parents and peers even though further investigations can be carried out through Internet. This might also explain the significant percentage of those who chose the option "other" (16%). In fact, a tradition of VET in the family results to be quite spread among current VET students. The following graph shows that more than half of the ICT students have at least one household member with a VET background. Incidence of the same profile of family tradition is

Graph 20. Main source of information in selecting the school



Graph 21. Members of HH with VET background



high also in the other three sectors with the lowest one (construction) with 35%. Even in construction, one in three students report VET to have been part of their family prior to their individual experience in VET.

In fact, unlike Xhumari and Dibra found[23], family and friends constitute the main contributing factor influencing choice and decision-making of students in opting for VET vs a general education. Overall, 53.5% of our respondents rank family and friends as the primary factor. Second most important factor is the employability that the school/profile is believed to offer (almost 40%). Across profiles, we find family and friends to confirm as 1st contributing factor in textiles and construction. ICT and Tourism, on the other hand, differ from textile and construction, as they do from the overall score. Most important determinant among students of these two profiles is reported to be "I liked the profiles the school offered" with 49.66% and 41.71% in tourism and ICT respectively. (For more details see Table 4 below.)

This trend holds also for VET trainees. In choosing their training center, they report that family and friends are among the top factors (in 33% of the cases). However, the two main factors are more related to talent/interests (40%) and the opportunity to learn a new profession through practice (35%). The variations observed between students and trainees need to be further tested (as trainees sample was smaller). However, it can be hypothesized that the age difference between the two groups can be a determinant in the gap between family/ friends dominance among students and individual interest/talent among trainees.

Upon choosing VET, VET students need to decide which profile to follow. In making this decision, other influencing factors come into play. For the whole population of our sample, 'opportunities to earn more' are the most important factor they consider when choosing the profile. However, this

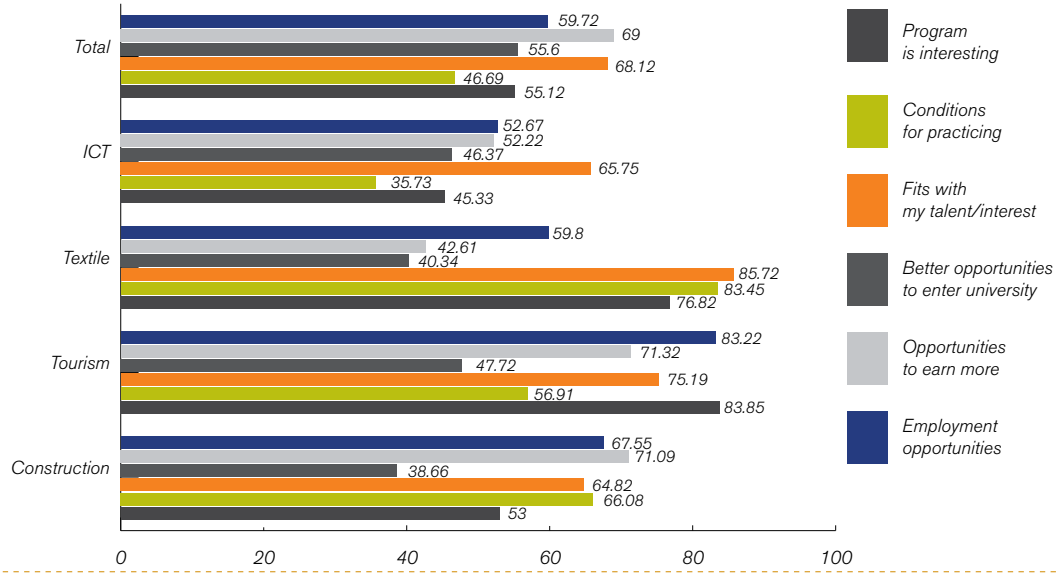
23 The results indicated that the main reasons for choosing VET were job opportunities, followed by interesting profile and university opportunities. Family expectations and friends' expectations were the least important factors (Xhumari& Dibra, 2014).

Table 4. Main contributing factors in choosing VET

Rank	TOTAL	Tourism	Textiles	ICT	Construction
1st	Family / friends 53.50%	Liked the profiles the school offered 49.66%	Family / friends 49.18%	Liked the profiles the school offered 41.71%	Family / friends 59.72%
2nd	Employability this school offers 39.57%	Employability this school offers 36.62%	Liked the profiles the school offered 31.16%	Family / friends 40.17%	Employability this school offers 38.81%

differs across our profiles of interest. The main overall factor is confirmed only in construction. Tourism is most attractive because of the program perceived by the students as interesting. While in ICT and textiles profiles, it is talent/interest, which rules among all influencing factors[24].

Graph 22. Most influencing factors in selection of profile



24 This finding is also in line with findings from previous research (see Dibra, 2015)

Interestingly, for trainees most influencing factor in choosing the profile/course consists in the content of the modules of the course (29.31%). Within expectations falls the second most important factor, the opportunity to practice (21%), which is claimed to be more abundant in VET programs.

Section 5. Quality of VET Provision

5.1. Curricula Development

Vocational qualifications in the secondary education public system are offered in one, two or three levels or block, following the respective education structures of 2+2 or 2+1+1, and 4 years, with exit and re-entry points, which, in principle, would allow vertical and horizontal flexibility. After the successful completion of each level, to the student is awarded a vocational certificate and at the end of the fourth year, a state Matura diploma as well (after the state Matura exams). In the first level (2 years), students follow the professional direction gaining generic competencies related to the qualification. In the third year, students can choose one of the profiles offered per each direction. In 2+1+1 education structures, the last year (third level) is again a generic one related to the professional direction.

The vocational education curricula is divided into (i) general education, (ii) professional theory; and (iii) professional practice, calculated in teaching hours, and is organized in national frame curricula and school curricula. National frame curricula are designed by NAVETQ. The general education component is composed by Ministry of Education, while the vocational part of the curricula is organized following a modular structure and is based on learning outcomes. School curricula are developed by vocational teachers of theory and practice, translating the frame curricula into teaching programs, preferably aligned with the specific regional needs. In this regard, teachers' role and their ability to perform this task is indispensable, as are the infrastructure conditions, the VET provider relations with employers, and the legal framework.

International projects supporting the Albanian VET system development in years have facilitated developing pilot curricula under the existing structure, e.g. GIZ/PEM "North-East Support for VET" Project in textile and garment, SDC/Swisscontact "AlbVET" Project in Thermo-Hydraulics. Statistics on vocational education enrollment (MoSWY (2015) and GIZ/ETF (2014)) show that sustainability of these interventions is high only if the project followed a systemic approach by supporting other components of VET, such as capacity development, infrastructure upgrade, formalization of the networking with business partners, etc., and if the intervention was national rather than local.

The table 6 below provides the curricula composition of different vocational education structures[25]. General education part of the curricula hours is more dominant in the first and last year of study. Generally, the highest percentage of professional practice is in the third year of studies.

25 The full curricula could be accessed at NAVETQ website. This structure refers to the national frame curricula. Pilot curricula have a different share of teaching hours.

Table 5: Vocational education structure and profiles

Sector	Vocational Direction	Structure	Profiles
ICT	ICT	2+2	support on ICT users; data network; web-development; website; multimedia; automatization technology electronics; pilot Austria
	Electronics	2+1+1	telecommunication; repair of electronic equipment; mechatronic
Construction	Construction	2+1+1	brickyard-plastering; road construction; paving; carpentry, iron-bending and concreting
	Geodesy	4	Geodesy
	Thermo-Hydraulics	2+1+1	Hydraulic installation; cooling and heating system installation; thermos-hydraulic installation; solar and hydraulic panels[25]
	Electro-technics	2+1+1	civil and industrial electrical installation[26]
Tourism	Tourism & Hospitality	2+1+1	reception; bar restaurant; kitchen &pastry; touristic guide
Textile	Textile - Confection	2+1+1	tailoring; textile; modelling; leather products; confection

Source: NAVETQ and MoSWY data. Authors' calculations

NAVETQ is supposed to be responsible for national training course curricula as well, but is not fully accomplishing this task due to the transitory period of transferring all VET responsibility under MoSWY and downstream institutions and VET law being under discussion. For the time being, regarding national courses, VTCs are operating with curricula formerly designed under NES responsibility, while for additional short-term courses offered by the center, instructors are responsible for designing the training course program following the instructions offered. Some 76% of instructors report that they are responsible to develop training course program and for 79% of them, the instructions provided are clear.

Data from the survey show how much the students, teachers, trainees and instructors are satisfied with the ratio between practice and theory. Generally, the students are more satisfied with this ratio compared with trainees. This difference might be interpreted as the trainees expecting more practice, since their interest in general knowledge might also be limited due to their previous education and future plans (work versus further education). Further investigations are needed in this regard.

26 Solar & hydraulic panels is one specialization in the 3rd level. The curriculum was developed as supported by AlbVET. No accurate information whether this profile is chosen is available.

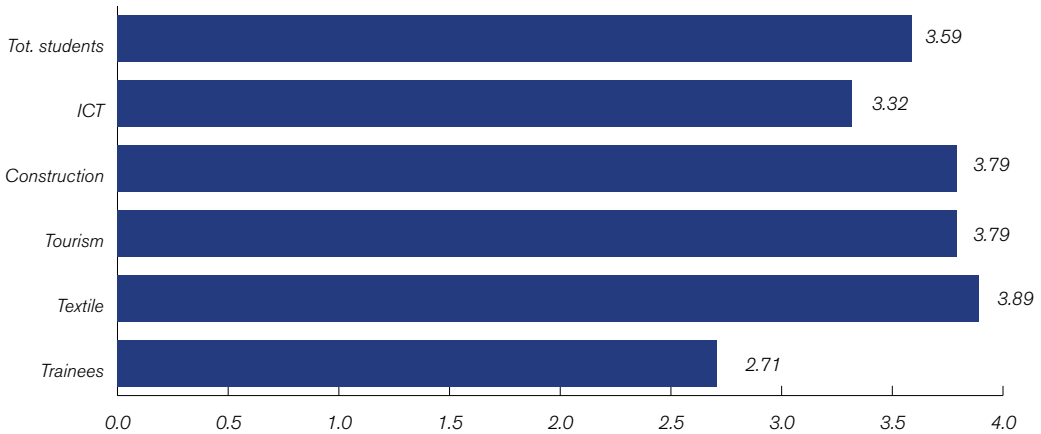
27 Other profiles include: electro-mechanics, installation and maintenance of high and low voltage lines, repair of electro domestic equipment, automatization technology

Table 6: General education – professional theory – professional practice ratio

Structure	Level	Class	General Education		Professional Theory		Professional Practice	
			Hours	%	Hours	%	Hours	%
2+1+1	I	10	540	48%	360	32%	216	19%
		11	374	35%	272	26%	408	39%
	II	12	240	24%	238	24%	511	52%
	III	13	510	50%	306	30%	204	20%
2+2	I	10	540	48%	360	32%	216	19%
		11	442	43%	272	27%	306	30%
	III	12	324	30%	324	30%	432	40%
		13	442	43%	272	27%	306	30%
4	III	10	540	50%	324	30%	216	20%
		11	396	35%	396	35%	324	29%
		12	432	39%	288	26%	396	35%
			476	45%	272	26%	306	29%

Source: NAVETQ. Authors' calculations

Graph 23: Satisfaction with theory vs practice teaching load



Students enrolled in textile sector related profiles are more satisfied with the theory-practice ratio compared with other sectors. This difference might come also as a result of the respondents share per year of study. Highest share of students in the third

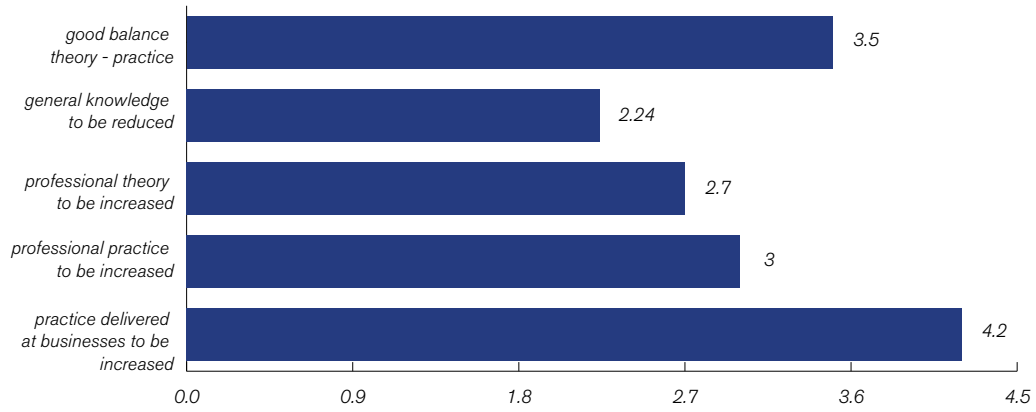
year, which has the highest percentage of practical hours, belong to textile profile.

Students enrolled in ICT programs are the least satisfied with the ratio. A deeper analysis is needed in this regard, but it is expected that ICT students need more practical subjects.

representing 43% of the respondents. Mean value of this option "reducing general knowledge" is increased to 2.71 (from 2.24) if only vocational teachers' responses are considered.

When only teachers of vocational subjects (both theory and practice) and VTC instructors are asked, the majority of them

Graph 24: Teachers' opinion on curricula



Teachers' dominating opinion on the curricula is related to the delivery of practice hours nearby business organizations. Some 79.5% of teachers believe that this is important or very important to achieve the learning outcomes. Regarding the share of different components, in the curricula, more than half of the teachers (52%) agree or strongly agree that there is a good balance between theory and practice. Increasing the professional practice hours is the most agreed option among the hypothetic changes in the curricula. The least agreed statement was related to reducing the general knowledge teaching-load. This might be a result of the general education teachers' answering this question,

believe that subjects, part of the vocational curricula, contain important modules for the vocation. The least agreed statement for vocational education curricula is the availability of the infrastructure to deliver the program, a dimension that for training centers is less problematic. As found in previous studies (GIZ/ETF, 2014), lack of infrastructure creates difficulties on achieving the learning outcomes, especially in professional practice modules. Generally, VTCs are better equipped.

This finding on vocational education is supported by MoSWY (2015) statistics, based on which only a limited number of profiles are chosen at each professional

direction, not taking advantage of the rich and various offer. There are a total of 29 profiles offered in sector-related professional directions and only 20 are chosen. It is expected that this limited choice is mainly due to the low number of students enrolled in each direction and limited resources in terms of infrastructure (equipment and consumables, laboratories and classrooms) and human resources. Sector analysis conducted for the purpose of Skills for Jobs Project inception phase research, reveal that some of these not chosen profiles are the most requested by respective or related economic sectors. From the selected sectors, in textile and ICT, lack of materials and infrastructure were identified as factors limiting the school curricula development

date with latest technology developments, a finding supported by sectoral analysis as well.

Teachers' opinion on vocational education curricula indicates the need for intervention in the content and form, in order to make it more absorbable for VET students (low academic achievers since entry). Teachers' capacity building is need regarding designing teaching programs based on learning outcomes and creating learning control mechanisms.

The above findings deriving from the teachers and instructors' survey indicate that vocational training, delivering vocational skill development through short-term courses, and having a less complex and more

Table 7. Demanded profiles from the labor market with no enrollment in VET

Structure	Level	Class	General Education
Tourism	Agro-tourism	Agribusiness	2+2
	Tourism; touristic guide	Tourism and Hospitality	2+2
Construction	Carpentry, iron-bending and concreting	Construction	2+1+1
Textile	Textile, modeling	Textile – confection	2+1+1
ICT	Website developer	ICT	2+2

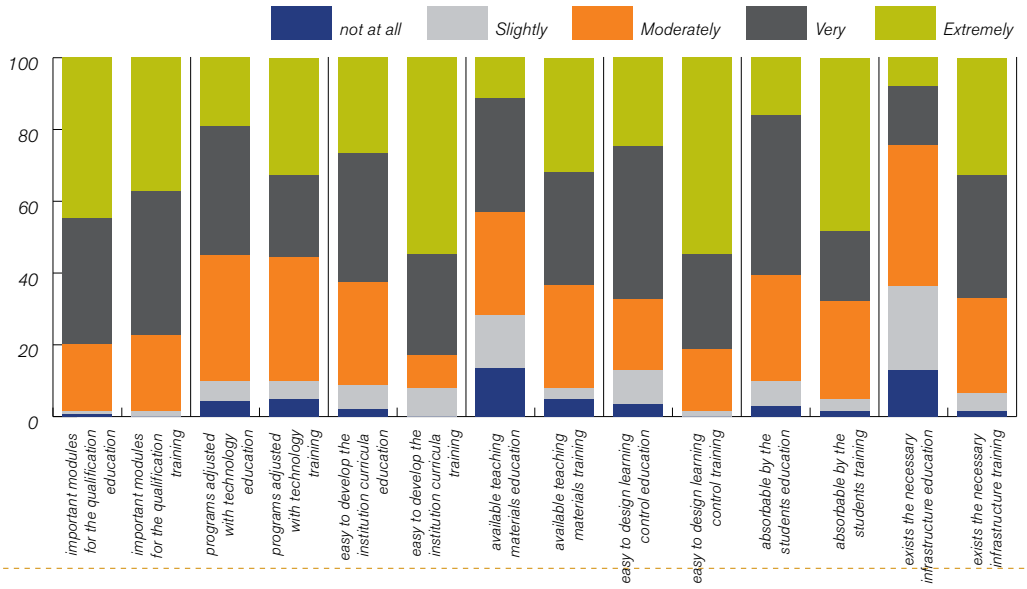
Source: MoSWY 2015 statistics and sector studies

Professional subject teachers in vocational schools (VS) and vocational training center instructors find the lack of teaching materials used for their classes or courses as problematic, a dimension that will be further developed in a separate section.

Among the least agreed statement is both the education and training programs being up to

decentralized curricula, face less challenges compared with vocational education. As a result, curricula reform in vocational education should be more thorough and carefully designed.

Graph 25. Opinion of teachers and instructors on curricula



5.2. Teachers and Instructors

Academic staff in a vocational school is composed by teachers responsible for general education subjects, teachers responsible for professional theory and for professional practice[28]. In VTCs, the teaching staff is composed only of instructors. There were a total of 216 vocational education teachers included in this survey, teaching general education subjects, professional theory, professional practice, and 71 short-term course instructors. Teachers cover form 1 to 4 subjects and there is not always a clear distinction on the type of subjects they teach. Most of the times, subjects fall under similar fields, like one teacher covering history, touristic geography and cultural heritage, or biology and environmental sustainable development, etc. While all respondents declare that their qualification fits (fully or partly) with the subject they teach, a closer look of the responses on the subjects they teach revealed cases of teachers teaching both thermos-hydraulics practical subjects and biology; or history and organic biology. This might be as a result of efficient (although not effective) human resources utilization to fulfill the teachers' minimal teaching load and cover the curricula.

Human resource demographics in VET show that in vocational schools the majority of teachers are females, while in VTCs the opposite is true. This is a result of females being oriented toward higher education over the last years and preferring the qualification as a teacher versus man that are more industry-oriented. There is an aging of academic staff as well, especially true for vocational teachers and instructors. More than half of vocational subjects' teachers (theory and practice) and 41% of instructors are above 50 years old. A considerable proportion of teachers are near retirement age (21.4% of academic

28 Professional practice teachers are often called "instructors", but in this study, the term "instructor" is used only for the conductor of short term training course.

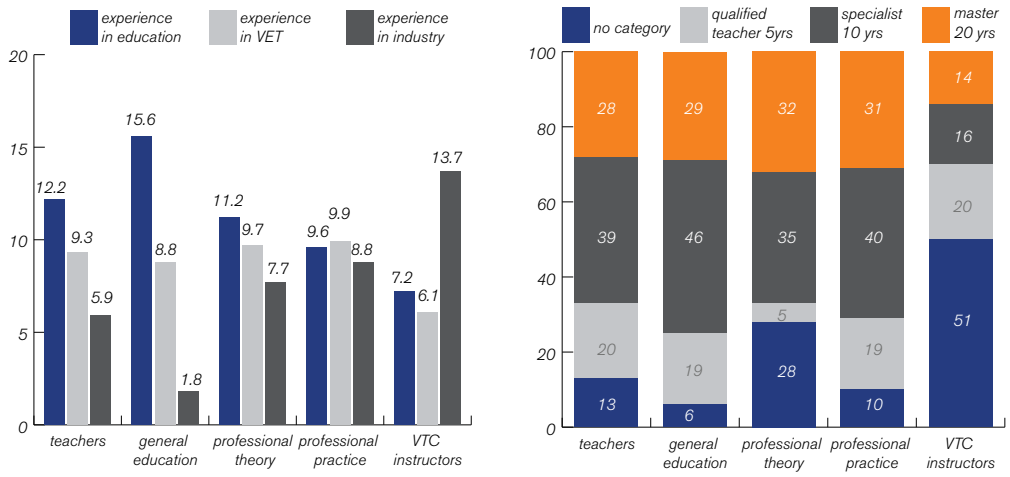
staff will retire by 2019 based on GIZ/ETF (2014) data). This presents a problem , as the perspective of working as VET teacher does not attract young graduates as the salary compensation is considerably lower compared with the industry related other jobs. While long experienced teachers consider the VET provider as the lifetime employer, the young teachers are more inclined to leave this job and transfer to the industry. This phenomenon is particularly true for vocational teachers in construction and ICT profiles.

Teacher is a regulated profession and one should have a university degree as a minimum criterion to be employed in a vocational school. For the instructors (and teachers of professional practice), this degree is not a must but priority is given to professional experience. In the sample participating in the survey, over 90% of vocational teachers have at least a university degree versus 62% of VTC instructors.

As expected, a cross tabulation of the vocational schools academic staff[29] shows a tendency of general education subject teachers to have a higher level of education, followed by vocational theory and vocational practice, and VTC instructors at the end with only 51% having a university degree. Distribution according to qualification degree indicates that among teachers, those teaching general education are in advantage of having teacher formal qualification, while striking is the fact that 28% of teachers dealing with professional theory are not qualified teachers. Vocational teachers and instructors have completed a vocational secondary school in the majority of cases.

Regarding work experience, the survey shows that vocational teachers have a limited experience in industry and professional practice teachers are in advantage. Having spent most of their latest work experience in an education institution limits their possibility to bring the new

Graph 26: Experience and qualification of teachers and Instructors

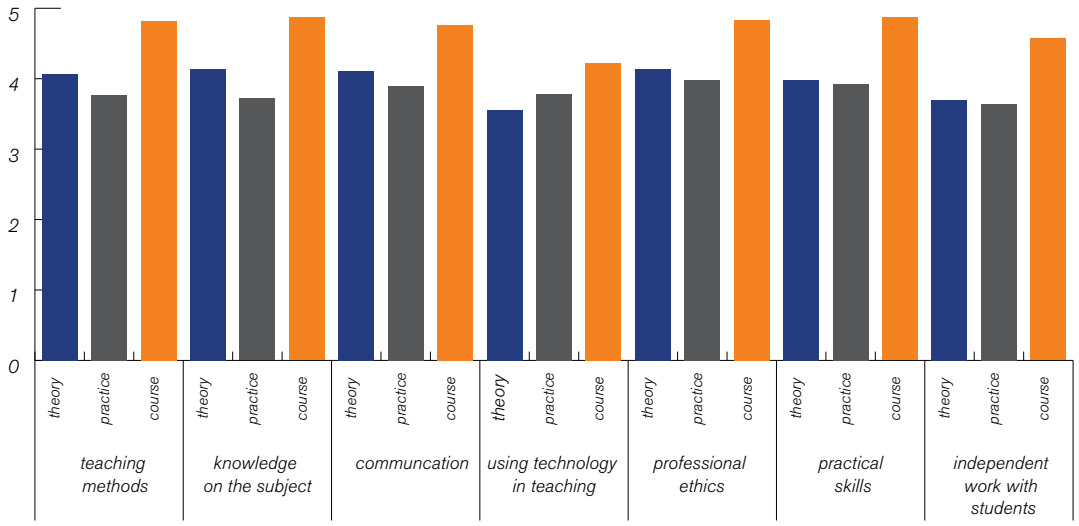


29 This cross tabulation should be interpreted related with the quality of teaching offered in different parts of the curricula, rather than teachers' categories.

technology developments in the learning site. Furthermore, 69% of teachers covering professional theory subjects and 60% teaching professional practice declare that they have not received an updating training nearby business organizations and the majority of them (60% of professional theory and 69% of practice teachers) declare that this training is important to very important. VTC instructors have an advantage in this regard as they come mainly from industry. Nevertheless, they rate "possibility for continuous professional development" as the most needed aspect to be improved.

education, students are more satisfied with teachers of vocational theoretical subjects, compared with vocational practice, regarding teaching methods, knowledge on the subject, communication, professional ethics, practical skills and independent work with students. This indicates that better qualified teachers (as theoretical teachers are) are perceived from students as better performing teachers. Vocational practice teachers, though, have an advantage in using technology in teaching. This findings needs to be further investigated, but it might be as a result of curricula, including software in professional practice modules.

Graph 27: Opinion of students and trainees on academic staff



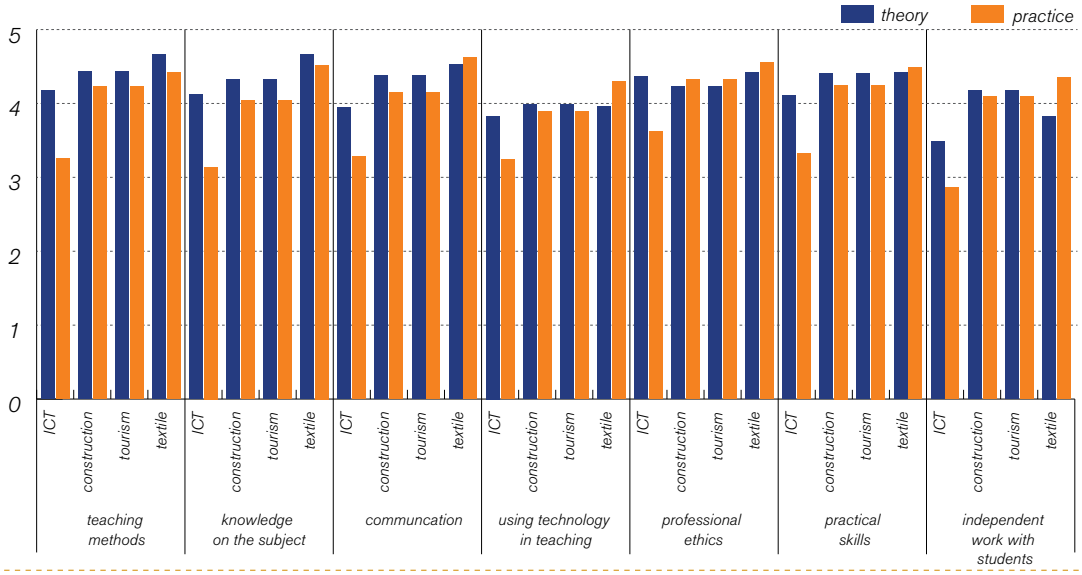
Students/trainees' opinion on teachers/ instructors shows that trainees are generally more satisfied with the instructors, compared with students at vocational schools, and evaluate especially their instructors' practical skills and knowledge on the subject. This might come as a result of instructors' experience in industry. In

A deeper analysis on sector profiles reveals that ICT students are less satisfied than others on all dimensions regarding teachers, except for professional ethics. For ICT students, professional practice teachers are in quite a considerable disadvantage compared with professional theory teachers. As supported by previous findings (GIZ/ETF,

2014) and key informants interviews, ICT vocational direction "suffers" from attracting qualified teachers since the ICT graduates or professionals are attracted by the highly paid jobs in industry offering more possibilities for advancement and development compared with VET institutions. The ICT profile is attracting the best VET students (highest average mark) and among the best graduates from compulsory school, who need qualified teachers, regularly updated and able to respond to their (students') expectations. Also, the interviews with graduates form this profile declared their dissatisfaction with teachers they had.

Students in textile are generally more satisfied with their vocational teachers, compared with their peers in other profiles. Textile practice teachers are in advantage for communication skills, using technology, professional ethics, practical skills, and independent work with students. Practice teachers in textile are using computerized programs in teaching like CAD/CAM. Based on textile sector analysis provided for this research, in the frame of "Rritje" USAID-funded Project (2013), the Textile and Fashion Department at Polytechnic University of Tirana developed tailored program for courses on CAD/CAM Design for garment manufacturing and several teachers of the VET schools attended the course successfully.

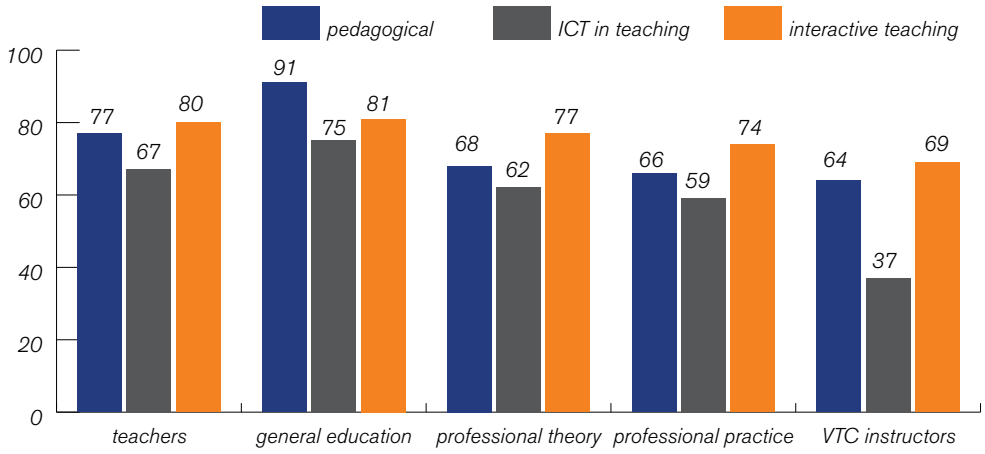
Graph 28: Sector-based students' opinion on academic staff



5.3. Teaching Methods

The survey data show that not all teachers had an initial training in pedagogy with general education teachers being in advantage. Teachers also declare to have received trainings for teaching methods, particularly using ICT and interactive teaching methods. Instructors are less trained than teachers,

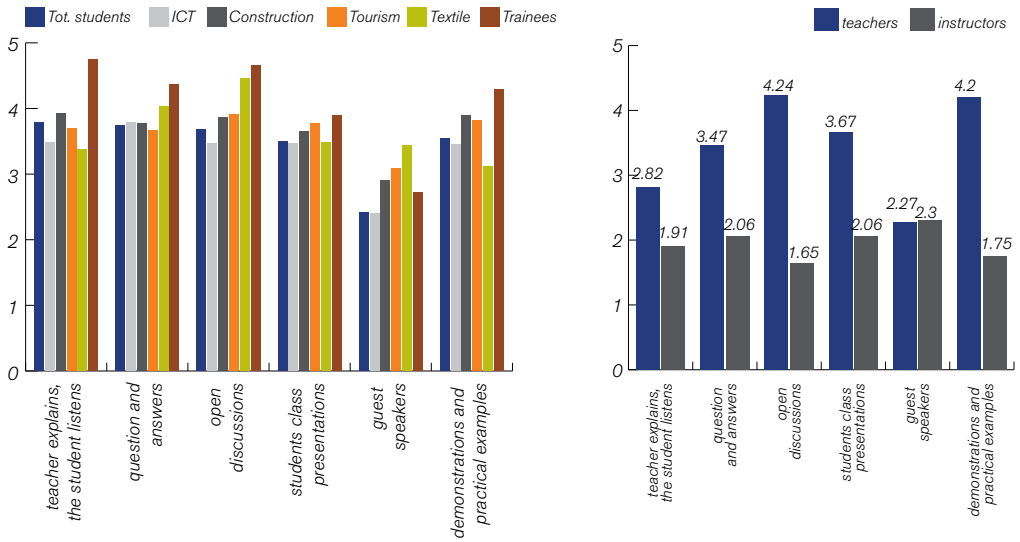
Graph 29. Academic staff trainings



particularly for ICT in teaching. Lack of pre-service training in VET motivated GIZ VET Program to offer an already tested training cycle for VET teachers, following a train of trainers approach. This is an easy to replicate initiative.

Both learners and teachers were asked on the teaching and control methods of learning results used in VET. Students/trainees declare that the rather not interactive methods are more often used in their learning places, while 84% of teachers and 95% of instructors declare that open discussions

Graph 30: Teaching methods



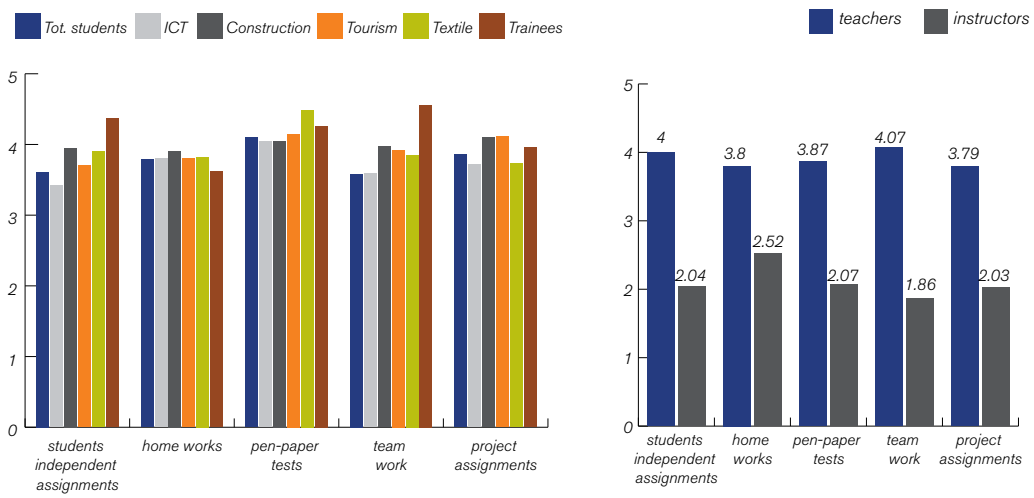
and demonstrations and practical examples are more frequently used. Guest speakers from the private sector are less used limiting the students from widening and updating their knowledge and skills and showing the rather isolated VET providers and low level of networking. VTCs seem more proactive in this regard because around 40% of instructors declare to use guest speaking frequently or very frequently compared with 20% of teachers. This method is more often used in professional directions of textile, tourism and construction. Students in textile declare a rather more open and collaborative teaching environment through questions and answers and open discussions.

Teachers in general, declare to apply more often different teaching methods, compared with VTC instructors, but trainees, compared with students, declare the opposite. These results need to be further investigated but is expected that are influenced by trainee's different profile (less educated and higher average age).

Both students/trainees and teachers/ instructors responses show a frequent use of learning result control methods, especially in vocational education. According to students, the mostly often used methods are pen-paper tests (70%), followed by home works (67%) and project assignments (66%), while teachers and instructors declare that use more often methods such as team work (74% and 94% respectively) and students independent assignments (75% and 89% respectively). VTC trainees declare a frequent use of these two methods as well (89% and 83%). Project assignments are used mostly in tourism and construction sector-related profiles, the same for demonstration and practical examples and group work. Teachers and instructors consider both learning in small groups and project assignments as the most effective teaching methods.

It looks like in education there is a higher level of using different teaching and control methods, compared with vocational training. Vocational education programs last longer and have a higher variety of subjects and teachers involved, compared with short-term

Graph 31: Result control methods



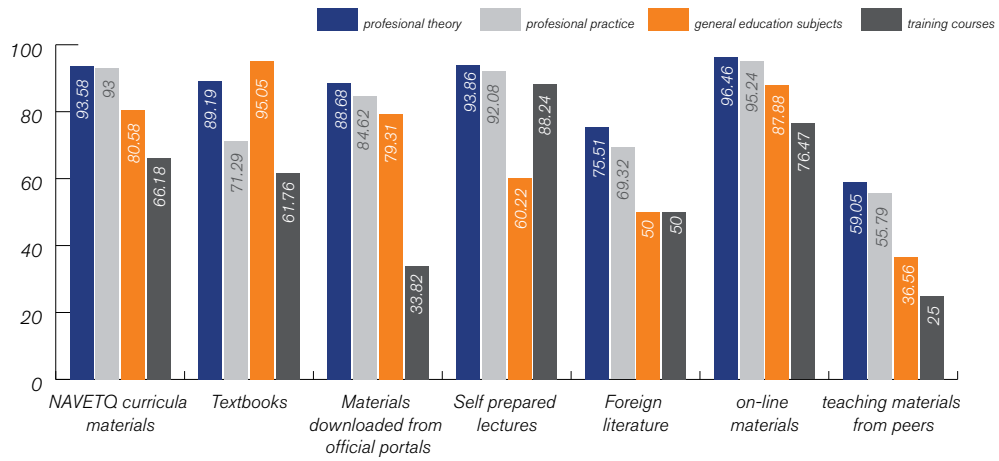
courses, which are delivered by the respective instructor. Furthermore, vocational teachers have a higher pedagogical qualification compared with instructors in vocational training.

5.4. Teaching Materials

Teachers were asked whether they find it difficult to access teaching materials and "neither easy nor difficult" was the most selected option, by 39% of teachers, while for around 25% of teachers it is difficult or very difficult to access teaching materials. Teachers and instructors reported that they use a variety of sources to access teaching materials. Vocational teachers are highly using materials from NAVETQ, regularly issuing frame curricula and instructions to develop it, as well as supporting teaching materials. NAVETQ is used less by instructors. As previously mentioned, vocational training curricula development was assigned to NAVETQ as a function in the frame of VET responsibility shift to MoSWY.

General education teachers have the highest rate of textbook use, being the main teaching material they use. They take advantage of the possibility to use general education textbooks, especially in the first years' subjects whose program is comparable with gymnasium. Compared with theoretical teachers, vocational teachers use fewer textbooks. In principle, textbooks from the official publishing house (BOTEM) are issued following the economy of scale principle. Books more likely will not be published, if the enrollment in the respective vocational profile is low. This applies more to theoretical subjects. Furthermore, the vocational subjects' teachers are encouraged to develop the teaching materials themselves to ensure the continuous update with latest technology and the adjustment with the teaching program designed and students' needs. Considering lower qualification level and higher need for training of VET teachers covering professional practice, their proficiency in developing teaching materials is questionable and needs to be carefully addressed.

Graph 32: Teaching materials



Foreign literature and teaching materials from peers are the least used sources indicating a general low level of teachers' update. This can be as a result of the foreign language skills (47% of teachers and 56% of instructors have no skills or understand and talk a little English) and lack of networking among colleagues in different providers. Among vocational teachers, the ones teaching theory seem to have a higher and various accesses to teaching materials compared with practice teachers. Vocational training instructors mainly use self-prepared lectures and have the highest level of using online materials.

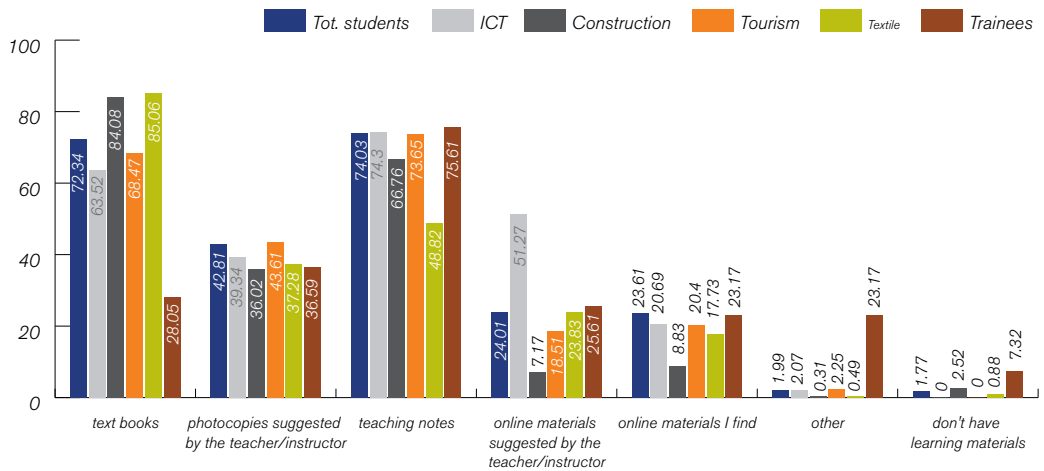
As students and trainees respond, teaching notes and textbooks are the most used learning materials, followed by photocopies suggested by the teacher or instructor, and online materials. For trainees, teaching notes are the main learning material, supported by instructors' responses indicating self-prepared lecturers as the main source of teaching materials.

A cross-sectoral analysis reveals that ICT students have a higher rate of using online materials, mostly suggested by the instructor and the lowest rate of using textbooks. New curricula, textbooks are not available and teachers take advantage of the available materials online. The opposite is true for construction-related profiles, where students mostly use textbooks and least online materials. This happens due to the high enrollment of students in vocational profiles related to construction industry, especially thermo-hydraulics and electro-technics. Furthermore, these vocational directions have been supported by international projects, including development of teaching materials. Students in textile use textbooks as the main learning material, while tourism students use teaching notes.

5.5. Learning Infrastructure

VET infrastructure is one of the major problems in the public VET system since many of providers do not dispose of the necessary materials and equipment to

Graph 33: Learning materials

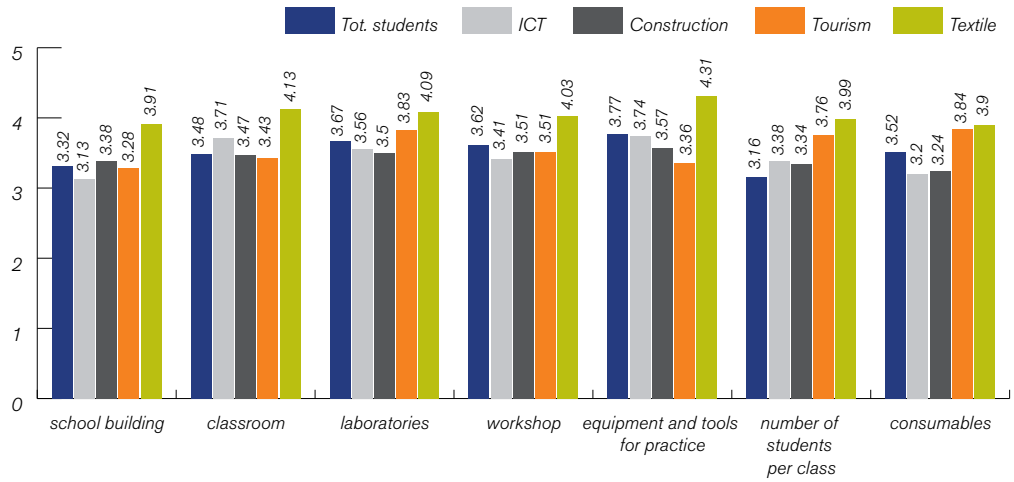


deliver quality VET programs. Since the system was underfunded and donor-dependent for many years, most of the reconstruction and big equipment placed in schools are coming from international aid, sometimes sector-related such as thermo-hydraulics from AlbVET program (SDC), economic schools from ALBiz project (KulturKontakt/ADA), regional VET support (North East VE program by GIZ), or provider-based (Beqir Cela, Kamza MFC by Swiss and German government respectively). Through IPA 2008 and 2011, EU supported the construction of 8 VSs serving almost all sectors. Based on the agreement, GoA was responsible for providing equipment and furnishing. Generally, these reconstructed/ newly-constructed schools are lacking specifications of a VET building, because there is no space for workshops (GIZ/ETF, 2014). IPA II (2015) budget support funds will be also used for the upgrade of the VET providers' rationalized network and MoSWY is currently identifying the needs to develop the projects' information cards.

When students, trainees, teachers and instructors are asked to identify the need for improvement in a series of factors related to the VET delivery, all respondents indicated equipment and tools used for professional practice as the most needed intervention. Other infrastructure related dimensions were rated as top priority. When comparing education with training regarding the need on infrastructure improvement, this survey confirmed previous studies/evaluations, that VTCs infrastructure is better compared with vocational schools. According to teachers, workshops and laboratory conditions need improvement. Students, spending a considerable time on selected school premises, could identify the need for improvement in laboratories and classrooms as well.

A comparison between economic sectors regarding education programs reveals that infrastructure conditions are more problematic in textile profile, for all related dimensions, followed by tourism and hospitality (in average level). Economic sector analysis revealed the importance of VET infrastructure in textile VET offer. For those providers that have been critically under-resourced for many years in terms of

Graph 34: Need for improvement in infrastructure



equipment, this handicap is reflected on the credibility of the programs they run.

International donors provided significant support on infrastructure for other, more industry-oriented as profiles such as construction. The detailed analysis of VE infrastructure in construction schools in the sector-related report identified that thermo-hydraulics professional vocation is better positioned in terms of equipment but still is suffering from lack of consumables.

For tourism sector, consumables, number of students per class and laboratories seem the most problematic. In interviews, tourism and hospitality schools directors declare that they find it very difficult to deliver practice modules related with food service since schools are not able to provide in time the ingredients needed due to the centralized procedures in financial management. Enrollment was increased as a result of government and schools propaganda, and vast possibilities for employment in tourism sector, but accommodating these students within the same school infrastructure, is causing losses in quality.

5.6. VET Provider Management

VET providers are operating under the direct or downstream MoSWY institutions' authority. The level of autonomy is mainly low, but varies among different providers. MoSWY is responsible for the VET network financial, human resources, and academic plan. NES is, since many years, responsible for the VTCs network management, while for vocational schools formerly under MoES, this function is covered directly by MoSWY, VET Directorate. VTCs are rather more autonomous and experienced in institution management. Vocational schools are still inheriting the consequences of centralization under MoES. As revealed also by GIZ/ETF (2014) baseline study, bigger schools with a tradition and history, mostly with a former national status, which enjoyed a certain higher level of autonomy and were assisted by international actors, have a rather better established structure and capacities. MoSWY vision, as expressed by the Minister himself, is to build a network of VET schools of excellence that enjoy a higher level of autonomy and offer a wider portfolio of education profiles and training courses, but the current status of the providers represents major challenges in this process of VET reform. Teachers declare that VET providers' autonomy and management need improvement (respectively 39% and 35% of teachers).

With regard to the financial autonomy, public VET financing system is centralized at the MoSWY level responsible for budget planning based on identified needs. VET providers have limited delegated functions, mainly on budget execution for staff salaries and operational expenses. Since January 2015, all VET providers enjoy this autonomy and financial officers were appointed to cover this task. Capital investments are usually concentrated under MoSWY. The highly centralized financial management and underfunded system create often difficulties in funds disbursement and prevents the normal development of teaching activity. VET providers' generated incomes, as allowed by law, could be a partial solution to this problem. However, as per the existing legislation, there is both ambiguity to generate such income and limited possibilities to use such revenues (Dibra, 2015).

VET providers have a limited autonomy on human resources management. MoSWY approves at the beginning of each academic year a total number of academic and

administrative staff employees. Employee recruitment, workload, continuous professional development and compensation are issues regulated by the legal framework in effect. VET providers can choose their staff based on open completion procedures and decision of selection committee (with representatives of VET provider and local community). Schools have to develop their capacity development plan, although due to limited resources it is limited mostly to internal development using peer-learning approach. GIZ VET program is assisting NAVETQ and MoSWY to address this issue and developed a roadmap for a smoother transition of responsibilities and follow-up activities (GIZ, 2016).

Vocational schools and VTCs enjoy different levels of academic autonomy. In vocational education, vocational teachers are free to develop the national frame curricula. The school principal then approves this teaching plan. Nevertheless, the schools enjoy no autonomy on offering additional programs in education or short term courses for the third parties, even though there is a demand and readiness shown several times by the school managers. As previously mentioned, only the Kamza MFC is offering short term courses, as it has a special status. The new VET draft law foresees this possibility for all VET providers as soon as they can find sources of funds to cover the costs.

The Director (headmaster/principal) is the main figure managing the VET provider, assisted by deputy director (responsible for courses materials in VTCs), the secretary - if the number of students in VSs is high and and a financial officer. The teaching staff is organized in departments according to subjects. Each vocational school has a Teachers' Council and a Parents' Council.

VET providers, especially schools, are mostly operating as isolated institutions and their networking with the local actors or other providers is rather low. The bodies or job positions which, could eventually link the VET provider with the external actors and their actual performance and limitations are as follows:

(i) VET provider Management Board, headed by a business representative with the membership of local actors (Regional Education Directorate/ Education Office, council of district, public employment office, VET provider's academic, student/trainees and employees organization). This body (as per the legal framework) is responsible for the approval of provider strategic, human resources and financial plan; offering advice on income generation activity; and for stimulating the collaboration with national and international partners. This important body is mainly formal and not functional.

(ii) VET provider director, as the representative of the institution, is playing the networking function as well. Latest analysis on VET Providers Managerial Capacities (GIZ/Dibra, 2015) revealed that managerial staff and institutional capacities need improvement to enable the networking function.

(iii) PASO was introduced by AlBiz project in all supported schools, as the person responsible for the schools relationship with businesses. This position is covered mainly by professional subjects' teacher trained for this task and with a reduced working load hours per week, as per the respective instruction of the Minister. Data from the survey show that 36% of

the teachers have appointed tasks similar to PASO but only 7% of them have a reduce of teaching load to enable them accomplish this task.

No proper structures are incorporated at provider level to cover students' career and professional orientation or coaching for employment.

Section 6. ICT Methods of Learning in VET System

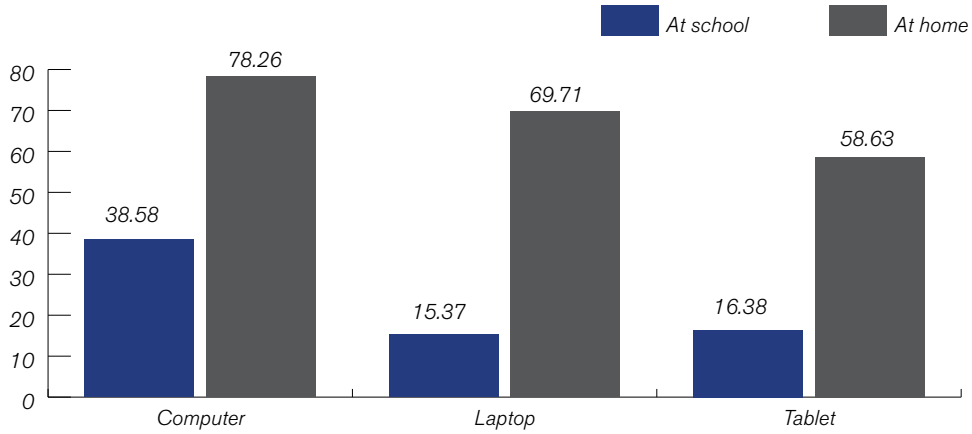
This section explores survey data related to the access to the infrastructure that supports teaching and learning with technology, trends in general technology use along with technology use in the school environment, and common perceived benefits and challenges to applying digitalization and blended learning in VET[30].

Access to Technology

Students and trainees were asked to rate their possibility of access to a range of technological devices (whether or not connected to the Internet) both at home and at the school environment.[31]

The data corroborate the presence of an unbalanced access to technological devices – with homes being the most common environment for students to access technology, as compared to schools. Students report that computers (78.26%) followed by laptops (69.71%) can be "easily or very easily" accessible in the vast majority of their households. Moreover, the rise of mobile devices (including tablets) among students and their families can also be

Graph 35. Access to technological devices (%)



Note: Percentage of surveyed students reporting scales 4 or 5 in a 5-point Likert scale

30 Consult Annex 1 for a general review of the ICT infrastructure in VET in Albania.

31 The students and trainees' surveys ask the following question "Do you have the possibility to use the following devices and services?"

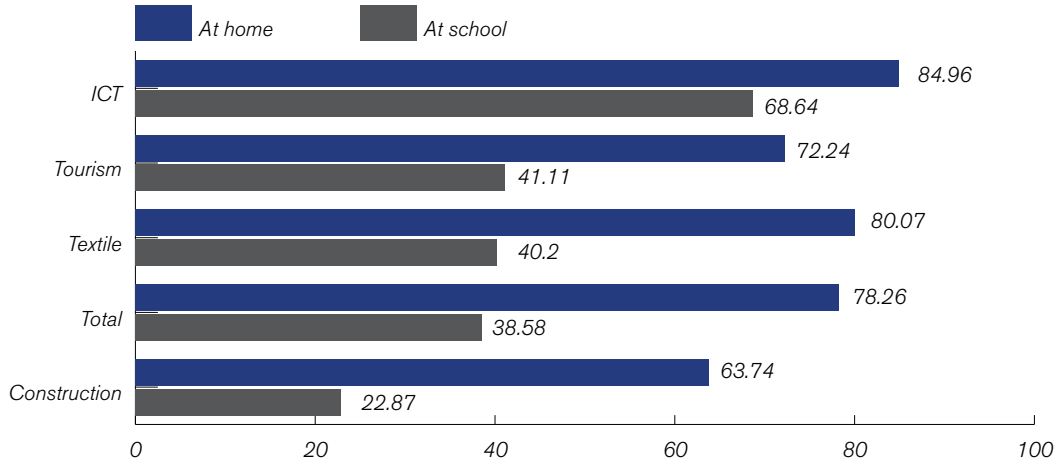
discerned; 58.63% of students state to have "easy or very easy" access of tablets at their homes. On the other hand, only 38.58% of them report the possibility of easy access to computers in schools, followed by considerably lower levels of possibility of access to tablets (16.38%) and to laptops (15.37%), accordingly.

This general discrepancy between the school and home environment is observable in the population of trainees, as well; computer accessibility at the training center (32.86%) is notably less possible as when compared to trainees' homes (79.45%).

respectively).[32] On the other hand, in the Construction sector, computer accessibility tends to be noticeably lower both at home and at school; only about 2 in 10 surveyed students in the Construction sector (22.87%) report to have an "easy or very easy" access to computers in schools, in comparison with 63.74% of them at home. See Graph 36 for the full visualization of access to computers across sectors.

With regard to the accessibility of a larger range of technological devices, students in the Textile sector are more likely to report having greater possibilities to access technological devices at home

Graph 36. Access to computers across sectors (%)



Note: % of surveyed students reporting scales 4 or 5 in a 5-point Likert scale.

The disaggregation of access to technology data by the four sectors of interest confirms the general trend of unbalanced technological access between the school and home environment. Even so, this technological discrepancy tends to be less pronounced among students in the Tourism and ICT sector (31.13 p.p. and 16.32 p.p. difference in computer accessibility,

(80.07% report to have an 'easy or very easy' accessibility to computers, 74.46% to laptops, and, 71.43% to tablets), followed by students in the ICT sector (84.96% report

32 Digital discrepancy is computed here as the percentage point difference between easy computer accessibility at home and easy computer accessibility at school. Easy accessibility refers to students reporting scales of 4 and 5 in the 5-point Likert scale of the respective question in the survey.

to have an 'easy or very easy' accessibility to computers, 70.03% to laptops, and, 51.51% to tablets).

However, survey findings point out that computers continue to be the most prevalent both at the school and home environment, followed by laptops and tablets. Yet, at the school environment, students in the Textile sector report to have easier accessibility to tablets (37.1%) than to laptops (34.45%); the same being reported by students in the ICT sector, also (15.19% compared to 8.55%).

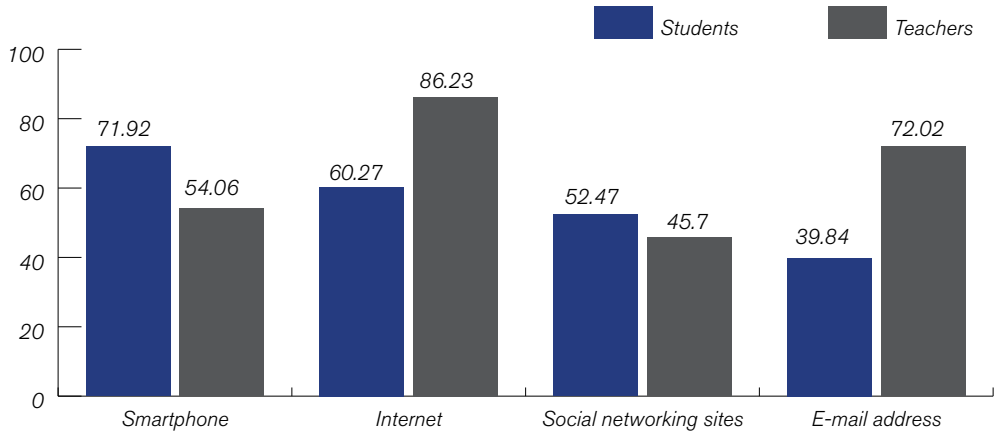
General Technology Use

The survey provides evidence on trends of general technology use by asking students/trainees and teachers/instructors how often they use different ICT facilities, devices or services.[33]

Survey data indicate that overall students have become exceedingly connected to technology, regularly making use of their smartphones, Internet, social networking sites and communication applications in their daily life. For instance, 71.92% of students describe themselves as using their smartphones "regularly or almost always". Additionally, nearly 6 in 10 of them (60.27%) report a regular use of the Internet, followed by more than half (52.47%) of students that use social networking sites. In contrast, it appears that the use of emails lags behind among students; only some 39.84% of students use their e-mail addresses regularly.

This general upward trend of technology usage can also be drawn from the trainee sample. Furthermore, survey data suggest that trainees appear to be more regular users of the Internet (62%) and social networking sites (62%) than students (60.27% and 52.47%, respectively). Some 44.74% of them report to use their e-mail addresses "regularly or almost always".

Graph 37. General technology use (%)



Note: % of surveyed students reporting scales 4 or 5 in a 5-point Likert scale

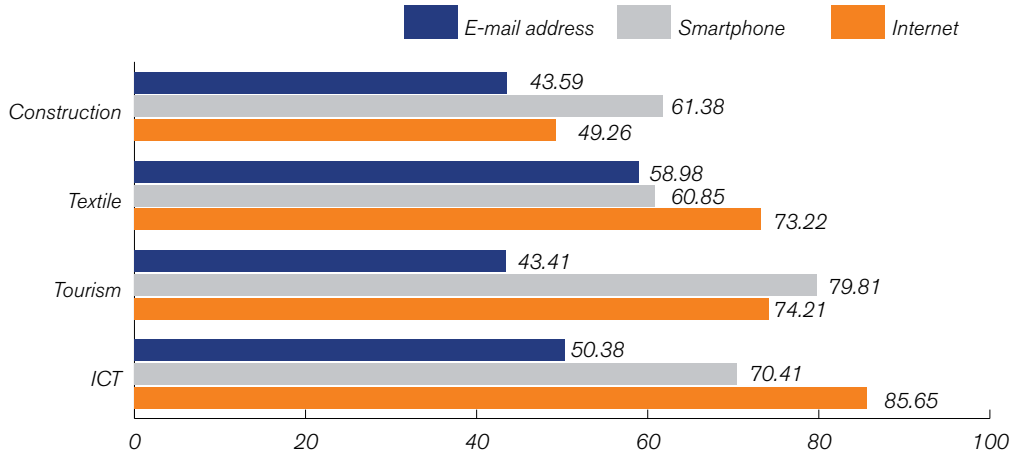
33 The students' and trainees' surveys ask the following question: "How often do you use the following?"

When compared to the teachers' population, students outpace teachers on their frequent use of smartphones (71.92% of students vs. 54.06% of teachers) and social networking sites (54.47% of students vs. 45.7% of teachers). Teachers, in turn, report a more frequent use of the Internet (60.27% of students vs. 86.23% of teachers) and of their e-mail addresses (39.84% of students vs. 72.02% of teachers). For more details see Graph 37.[34] On the other hand, also instructors outpace their trainees on their frequent use of Internet (74.6% of instructors vs. 62% of trainees) and of their e-mail address (67.74% of instructors vs. 44.74% of trainees).

A closer look across sector levels reveals that students in Construction tend to be less connected to technology as compared to the other sectors. For instance, while the Internet is used regularly and to a great extent by almost the vast majority of students in the other sectors (in a range of 73.22% to 85.65%), only less than half of students (49.26%) report to "frequently or almost always" use the Internet in the Construction sector. With regard to the use of other technological devices/tools, smartphone use is higher among students in the Tourism sector (79.81%), whilst social networking sites (67.92%) and e-mail addresses (58.98%) are most frequently used by students in the Textile sector.

When, in turn, students are asked on the confidence and ease to learn to use new electronic devices and installed programs, the findings tend to mirror their reported current use of the given ICT facilities, devices or services. For example, students in the ICT (76.73%) and Textile sector (71.83%) tend to demonstrate a greater confidence in learning new devices than the average student population (65.14%). On the other end of the spectrum, confidence and easiness drops to 45.86% among the students in Construction; 1 in 4 students

Graph 38. General technology usage across sectors (%



Note: % of surveyed students reporting scales 4 or 5 in a 5-point Likert scale

34 The teachers' survey asks the following question: "How often do you use the following devices and services in general?"

in the Construction sector states that it is not easy for them to learn to use electronic devices and new installed programs. For more see Graph 39.

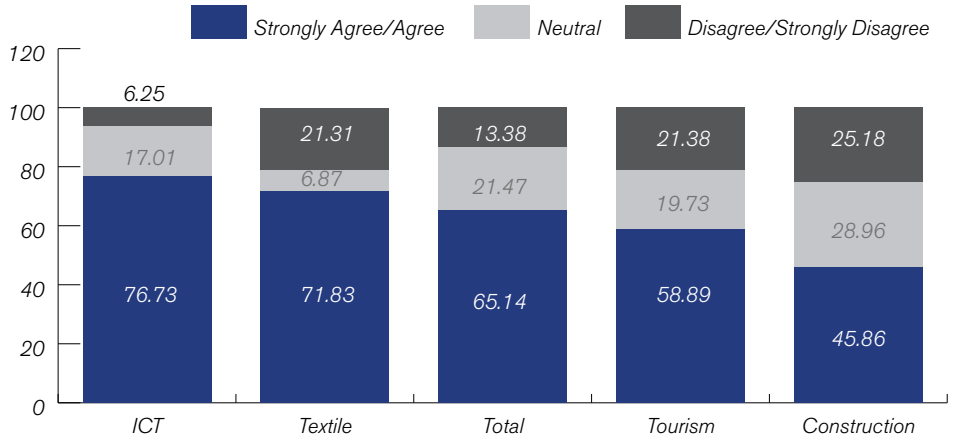
In comparison, trainees on the whole (48.1%) perceive less confidence and easiness than students (65.14%). Furthermore, the majority of teachers (66.83%) and of instructors (77.08%) appears to report even more confidence and easiness when compared to the average student (65.14%) or trainee population (48.1%), respectively. Relational analysis shows a significant correlation between teachers' perceived confidence in learning to use new electronic devices and installed programs and their level of computer literacy: the higher the teachers' reported computer literacy, the more confident they tend to be in learning new devices.

Technology Use for Learning/Teaching Purposes

The survey provides evidence on current trends of technology usage for learning/teaching purposes by asking students/teachers whether they use Internet to study or prepare teaching materials, how often and where they use it, and if they also make use of computer programs specific to their professional profile.[35]

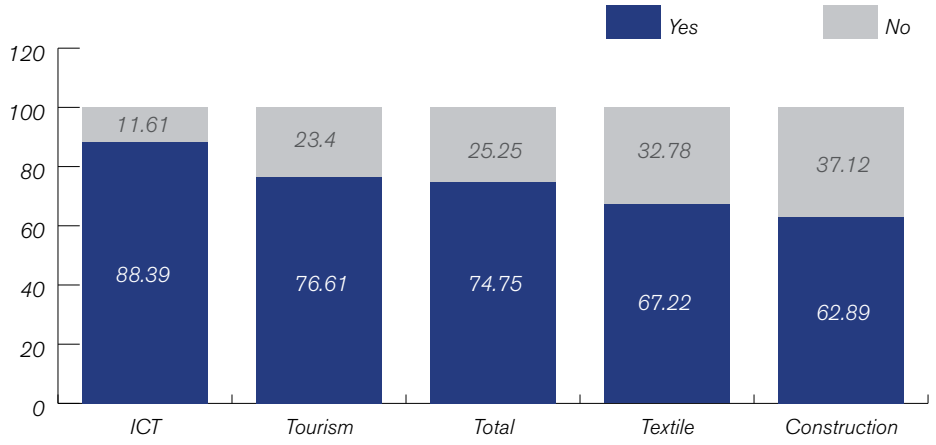
First, findings indicate that, on the whole, the use of Internet websites for studying purposes is fairly common among students in VET; it is reportedly utilized by ¾ of students (74.75%) in vocational schools and 63.41% of trainees in vocational centers. Variation across sectors reveals that students in ICT (88.39%) – as expected, are more likely to use Internet to study, followed by students in the Tourism sector (76.61%). Then again, students in the Construction sector tend

Graph 39. It is easy for me to learn to use electronic devices and new installed programs



35 The surveys ask the following questions: "Do you use internet websites to learn?" "How much do you use the internet to study" "Do you use computer programs specific to your professional profile?"

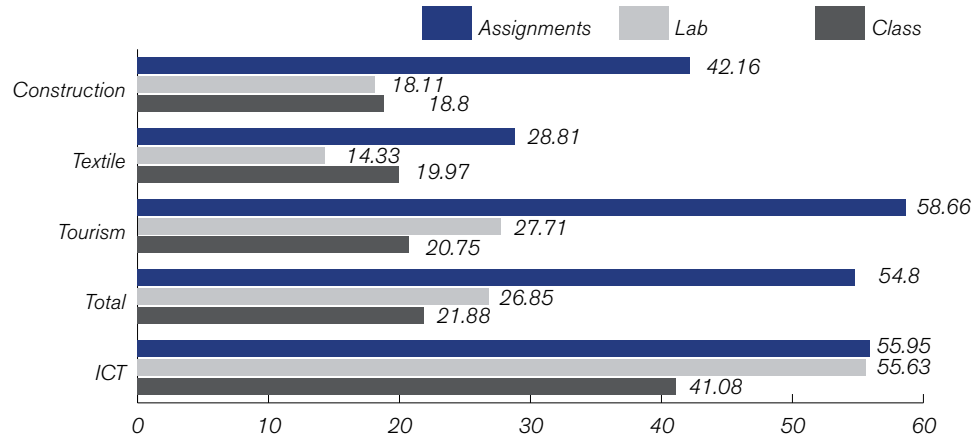
Graph 40. Students' use of Internet to study across sectors (%)



to use the Internet to a lesser extent. Only 62.89% of students in the Construction sector report using Internet websites for study purposes compared to the student average of 74.75%.

used by students for working on their assignments[36] (54.8%) and for communicating electronically with teachers or other fellow students (53.96%). Trainees share the same trend as the student population; 42.86% of them frequently use

Graph 41. Frequency of Internet use for studying across sectors (%)



Note: % of surveyed students reporting scales 4 or 5 in a 5-point Likert scale.

Second, the Internet is most frequently

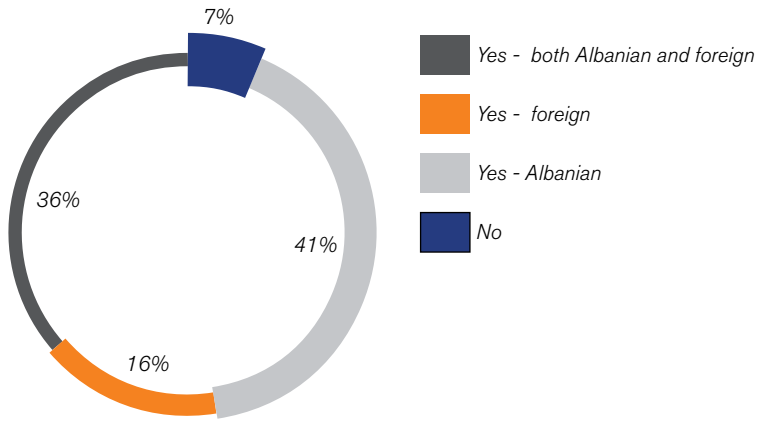
36 Assignments here refer to homework assignments.

the Internet for assignments, and an almost identical proportion (41.18%) uses it for communication with instructors or other trainees.

The disaggregation across sectors suggests that students in Tourism (58.66%), followed by students in ICT (55.95%), are more likely to use the Internet for working on their assignments than the average student population.

frequently use the Internet for learning purposes in labs (for more see Graph 41). On the other hand, in comparison with the student population, the vast majority of teachers (93.53%) and instructors (86.36%) report higher levels of Internet usage for studying or preparing material purposes; only 7% of teachers sustain that they do not visit any Internet websites for studying or preparing teaching materials (See Graph 42 for a visual outline). As regards the

Graph 42. Teachers' use of Internet websites to study or prepare teaching materials (%)



Third, the use of Internet websites for learning purposes is scarcely utilized in the classroom environment or respective labs. On average, only nearly 2 in 10 students (21.88%) use the Internet "frequently or almost always" in the classroom environment, whilst 26.85% of them use it in the lab. As expected, the Internet in the classroom and lab is used most frequently used among ICT students (41.08% and 55.63%, respectively), and less used among students in the Construction (18.8% and 18.11%, respectively) and Textile (19.97% and 14.33%, respectively) sectors. Some 27.71% of students in Tourism report to

language of the websites used, the majority of teachers or 41% of them uses websites in Albanian, whilst a slightly smaller proportion (36%) uses websites both in Albanian and other foreign languages.

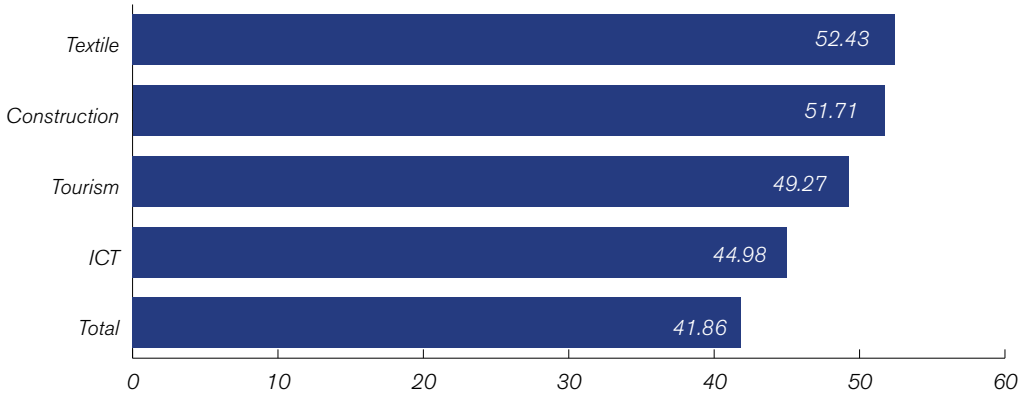
Forth, asked on the assistance to find out about these Internet websites, both students and teachers remain largely self-reliant, not making use of recommendations from fellow students/colleagues or other sources of information. The majority or 68.35% of students relies upon themselves, followed by 20.1% of them who are assisted from their teachers; only 1 student

in 10 is recommended from their peers for finding these websites. This general finding appears to be consistent across all sectors, with the exception of the Textile sector, in which nearly 1 in 3 (31.03%) students relies upon their peers for suggestions on Internet websites for learning purposes, followed by 17.03% of them who relies upon their teachers. The percentage of students relying more heavily on their teachers is found in the ICT sector (26.9%). The population of trainees suggests to be further assisted by teachers for choosing the websites they use for learning purposes (32.26%) as compared to the average student population (20.1%). On the other hand, teachers as well appear to be largely self-reliant in finding websites for studying or preparing teaching materials (66.38%); only 16.16% of the teachers are recommended by their colleagues in choosing the websites and 9.17% from institutions.

Fifth, when asked on the use of computer software specific to their professional profile, whilst 44.95% of students state that they do use profile specific software, a somewhat smaller proportion (41.86% of them) report not using any such software. The occurrence of not using profile-specific software is more pronounced in the Textile (52.43%) and Construction (51.71%) sector, as opposed to students in the ICT sector (44.98%). For a fuller outline see Graph 43. In general, findings show that some of the most frequently mentioned software consists of: AUTOCAD, CAM, Multisim, Packet Tracer and the Microsoft Office package. Survey data also indicate that in the training centers, the use of profile-specific installed software lags behind; 58.67% of trainees (as compared to 41.86% of students) and 61.67% of instructors (as compared to 48.17% of teachers) report not using any software at all.

From an exclusively teachers' perspective on other hand, when asked on technology use for teaching/professional purposes, the majority of teachers report that computers (58.77%), laptops (55.39%), and projectors (52.36%) are most likely to be used "frequently or almost always". Moreover, some 49.46% of teachers report using the Internet in the classroom environment for simulations, and 41.63% of them use their

Graph 43. Percentage of students not using profile-specific software across sectors



e-mail addresses frequently. However, newer technologies such as tablets (23.15%), smart-boards (22.29%) and smartphones (21.27%) have a relatively low uptake and are yet to be used significantly. Along these same findings, instructors appear to also be most likely to use computers (61.54%) and Internet for class simulations (59.65%) among other technologies.

Perceptions of Benefits and Challenges to Using Technology in the Classroom

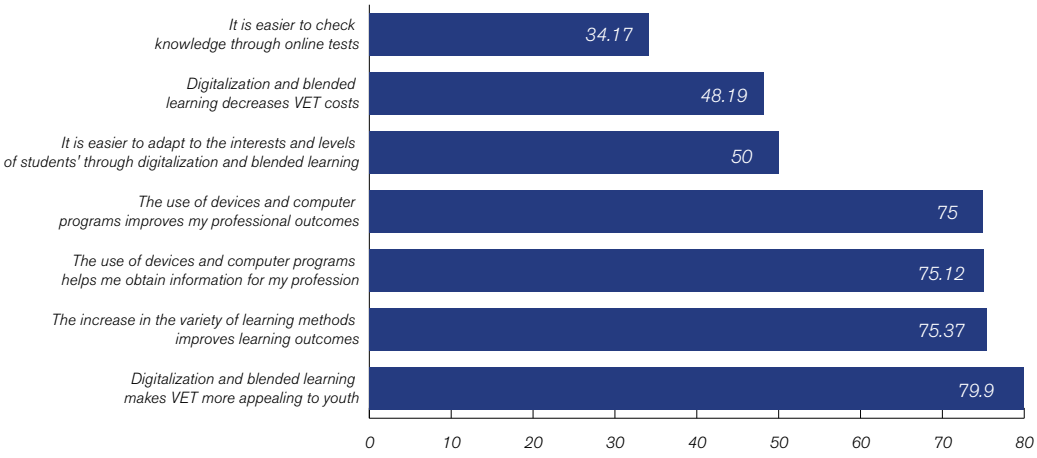
At last, the survey provides evidence regarding teachers' perception on the potential benefits and challenges to growing digitalization and possible application of blended learning in VET.

Asked on their opinion on various statements on the subject of blended learning, data demonstrate an increasing interest in blended learning among the teachers' and instructors' populations – with most teachers surveyed being highly optimistic about the positive impact of technology on their jobs and on their students' professional outcomes. See Graph 44 below for the illustration of some important statements used to assess the perceived benefits of blended learning.

The vast majority (75.37%) of teachers "agree or strongly agree" that an increase in the variety of learning methods improves students' learning outcomes, and an also similar majority (75%) appears to agree that technology improves their professional outcomes, as well. Moreover, an almost identical proportion of teachers (75.12%) further consider that technology is valuable to obtain information for their professional profile. Nearly all teachers (79.9%) acknowledge that digitalization has the potential to make VET more appealing to youth. On the other hand, yet just under half (48.19%) believe that digitalization and blended learning decreases VET costs; and, only nearly one-third (34.17%) of the teachers felt that it is easier to check knowledge through online tests.

Asked on their perceived effectiveness of various teaching methods, survey data

Graph 44. Teachers' perceived benefits of blended learning (%)

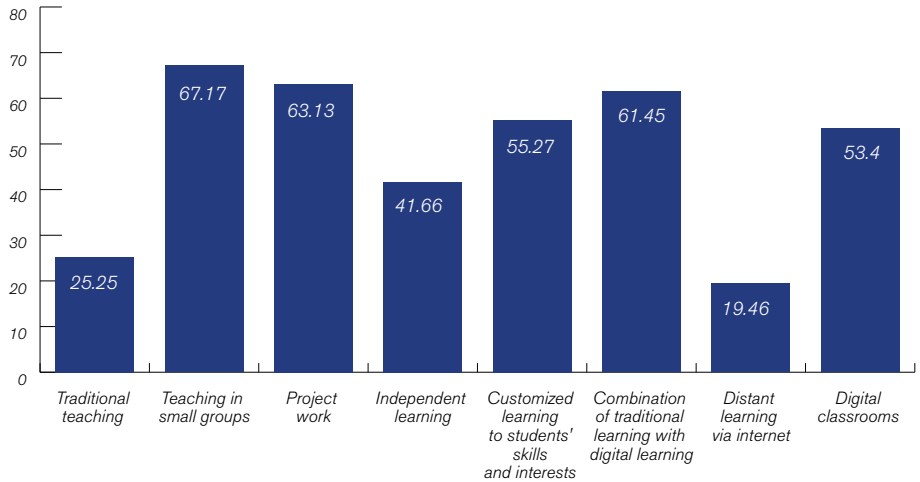


Note: % of surveyed teachers reporting scales 4 or 5 in a 5-point Likert scale

suggest that teachers appear to regard newer teaching methods more effective than the traditional ones. The majority of teachers perceive teaching in small groups (67.17%) and project work (63.13%) as "effective or very effective". Moreover, teaching in small groups (75.81%) and project works (73.02%) appear to be ranked highest among the instructors' population, also.

Furthermore, the combination of traditional learning in the classroom with digital teaching is expected to be "effective or very effective", as assessed by 61.45% of teachers and 55.56% of instructors, respectively. Even so, instructors appear to be more resistant to newer teaching methods than teachers: 55.56% of them are inclined to value traditional teaching where the teacher lectures and checks knowledge through questions and written paper-based exams as "effective or very effective", in contrast to only nearly 1 in 4 teachers (25.25%). In addition, digital classrooms are also perceived to be less effective by instructors as compared to the teachers' population (37.93% of instructors expect them to be "effective or very effective" vs. 53.4% of teachers). Instructors, on the other hand, argue that digital media could be more effective, if used as supportive teaching material or for illustration purposes. In turn, teachers (19.46%) and instructors (17.74%) perceive distant learning, as another ICT enabled teaching method, as the less effective teaching method. On the other hand, personalized/customized teaching to students' skills and interests is perceived to be more effective in training. Some 62.07% of instructors expect it to be "effective or very effective" vs. 55.27% of teachers. This finding corroborates trainees' indication that personalized learning is the second most important needed field of improvement in the training center[37] among a list of 12 factors (including infrastructure, curricula, teaching and career-related factors). This might come as a result of the general wider variety of learners in VTCs, mainly with regard to their age and previous educational attainment or working experience, as compared to the rather homogeneous group of learners in education.

Graph 45. Teachers' perceived effectiveness of various teaching methods (%)



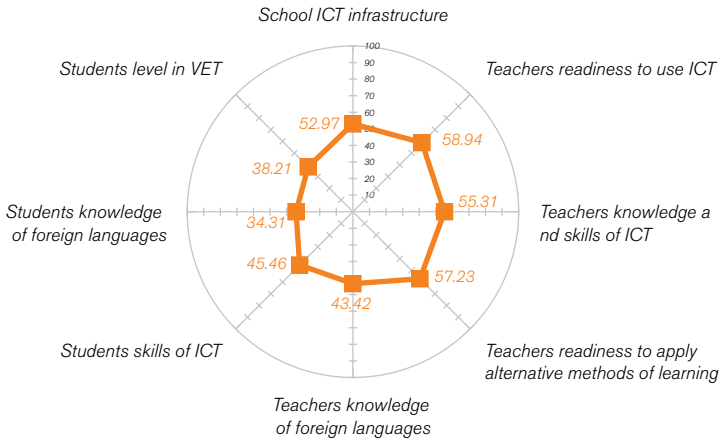
Note: % of surveyed teachers reporting scales 4 or 5 in a 5-point Likert scale

37 They were asked to choose among a list of 12 potential factors, including infrastructure, curricula, teaching and career-related factors.

Graph 46 shows teachers' ranking of their perceived challenges of applying blended learning in vocational education. Survey data indicate that teachers perceive most of the challenges on their side focusing on issues of ICT literacy and familiarity with alternative methods of teaching, as compared to their students or general ICT infrastructure. For instance, teachers' readiness to use ICT (58.94%) is believed to be more challenging than respective schools' ICT infrastructure (52.97%). In fact, teachers' readiness to use ICT (58.94%), teachers' knowledge and skills of ICT (55.31%) and teachers' readiness to apply alternative methods of learning (57.23%) are considered as "challenging or very challenging" by the majority of teachers.

Along the same line, the vast majority of surveyed instructors (82.82%) believe that teachers readiness to apply alternative methods of learning is "challenging or very challenging", followed by teachers readiness to use ICT (79.1%) and teachers knowledge and skills of ICT (74.6%). But contrary to teachers' perceptions, instructors see also their trainees' knowledge of foreign languages as especially challenging (63.64%).

Graph 46. Teachers' perceived challenges of applying blended learning (%)



Note: % of surveyed teachers reporting scales 4 or 5 in a 5-point Likert scale

Section 7. Employability, Future Intentions, and Expectations

7.1 Results of the Students and Trainees' Survey

This section of the report analyses the information on employment opportunities and expectations on employment as well as opinions on factors that affect employability

of VET graduates. The information on the majority of the questions has been gathered through the survey with both students of VSs and trainees at VC as well as teachers and instructors, when necessary questions were tailored to fit the profile of the interviewee.

Information Adequacy on Employment Opportunities

Table 8 presents the answers of students and trainees to the question whether the information provided at school/center level on the employment opportunities of future graduates is sufficient to them. In total, 62% of students and 68% of trainees think that this information is sufficient. Some 23% of students and 16% of trainees are not able to judge about it, and 15% of students and 17% of trainees think that the information provided to them is not sufficient at all. However, there are noticeable differences in the answers to this question between the four sectors under consideration, and these differences are statistically significant. The information provided is more adequate in the tourism and construction sector; 79% and 67% of those studying in these areas respectively claim that they have sufficient information on employment possibilities after graduation. However, there is a considerable difference between those that cannot provide an answer to this question in these two sectors. Some 25% in the construction sector do not know whether the information provided to them was sufficient, compared to only 8% in the tourism area. Some 19% of students in the ICT profiles and 23% of those studying in the textile profiles think that the information is not ample enough, and 28% in the ICT profiles and 18% studying in the textile sector are unclear about the validity of the information provided to them.

Table 8. Provision of information at school/center level on employment opportunities

	ICT	Construction	Tourism	Textile	Total Students	Total Trainees
Yes	53.7%	67.0%	78.8%	59.0%	61.9%	67.5%
No	18.7%	8.0%	13.1%	23.0%	14.8%	16.9%
Don't know	27.6%	24.9%	8.1%	17.9%	23.4%	15.7%
	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Sources of Information on Future Employment Opportunities

The respondents were asked to select the appropriate sources of information for their future career or employment opportunities. Students were asked on a wider range, while trainees had a limited choice because some of the sources are not relevant to Vocational Centers. Table 9 presents the percentages of selected sources by schools and vocational centers, as well as by sectors for the student's sample only. Starting from the figures at school and center level, the main source of information on employment opportunities are the teachers of practice (60.7%) and instructors at vocational centers (70.7%). Friends and relatives constitute the second main source of information for the trainees.

About 40% of the trainees have claimed this is an important source of information. As for the students, the second main source of information, selected by about one third of the students, is school management. Some 36.6% of the students have also claimed that they receive information on employment possibilities by their friends and relatives. The teacher responsible for the relations with businesses has been selected as a source of information by about one fourth of the students, although expectations are considerably higher. A possible explanation for the low figure could be the fact that such a position is not available in each school. This is usually a position supported by foreign donors investing in VET schools. It is also important to note that the career office is the last important source of information, a finding that highlights the need for functional and active career offices. About 26% of the students have selected other teachers as important sources of information for their employment. Web search is also used as a source of information by about 20% of the students and 13% of trainees.

Regarding these sources of information by sector for the students of VSs in the sectors of tourism, ICT, construction, and textile, the trend follows that of the total figures without major deviations. The most selected source of information is the teacher of practice. Friends and relatives constitute a major source of information in the ICT sector (45.3%), while in the construction and tourism sector their importance is lower, at about 21 per cent. In the textile sector they account as a source of information for an even lower percentage of students, 9.6 per cent. School management was selected by about 40% of the students in the construction, textile

Table 9. Relevant sources of information on employment opportunities

	ICT	Construction	Tourism	Textile	Total Students	Total Trainees
School management	24.2%	39.1%	40.9%	41.5%	36.6%	25.6%
The teacher responsible for business relations (PASO)	22.6%	23.7%	26.4%	42.1%	26.2%	NA
The teacher of practice/ instructor	73.1%	67.2%	88.3%	58.8%	60.7%	70.7%
Other teachers	18.7%	19.2%	23.0%	23.9%	25.9%	NA
Career office	7.0%	7.2%	8.0%	3.1%	8.1%	NA
Friends and relatives	45.3%	21.8%	20.9%	9.6%	25.7%	40.2%
Web search	41.3%	8.0%	11.8%	14.3%	20.1%	13.4%

**NA - Not asked*

and tourism sectors, while its importance as a source, is lower in the ICT sector (24%). The teacher responsible for the business relations is considered more in the textile sector (42%), while underperforming at the other three sectors. As expected, web search is used about 4 times more by the students of ICT compared to other students. Those in the construction studies use web search less than the others.

Plans of the Graduates Upon Completion of Studies

The plans that students and trainees have after finishing VE studies/trainings are very different. About 60% of the trainees plan to search for a job right after finishing their course, while only 22% of the students think so. One fifth of the trainees plan to emigrate after finishing the course, while only 3.5% of the students are planning to emigrate. Some 10% of the trainees plan to continue the course to a higher level. Concerning the students, 34% think they will continue their education to a higher-level VET and 32% of them plan to continue their studies towards a university degree. For both the students and the trainees a low percentage has planned to work in a family business after the course/studies.

Regarding the same information for students at the sector level, the most interesting figure is that of ICT students, 51% of which plan to continue their university studies after

Table 10. What do you intend to do after finishing school/course?

	ICT	Construction	Tourism	Textile	Total Students	Total Trainees
Search for a job	15.8%	42.1%	20.6%	14.2%	21.9%	59.8%
Continue VET education (course) at a higher level	23.3%	33.3%	32.5%	27.8%	34.2%	9.8%
Go to university (high school)	51.0%	6.7%	33.7%	38.1%	31.9%	1.2%
Stay home	0	1.0%	0	4.9%	0.6%	1.2%
Work in a family business	1.5%	2.4%	2.2%	6.3%	2.1%	4.9%
Emigrate	6.6%	6.8%	6.8%	1.0%	3.5%	20.7%
Don't know	1.7%	7.6%	4.2%	7.7%	5.2%	NA*
Other	0	.2%	0	0	.6%	2.4%

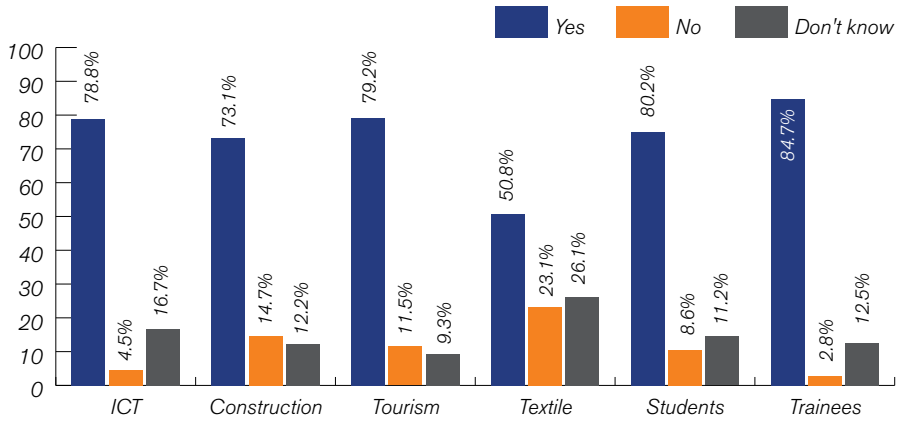
**NA - Not asked*

graduation, a figure that is considerably higher than that of the other sectors. The difference is more pronounced comparing with the construction sector, in which only 6.7% of the students plan to attend university. Attending university studies is a plan for 33% of the students in the tourism, and for 29% of those in the textile sector. Continuing to other levels of VET system is a plan for 23- 33% of the students in these sectors. However, the most striking finding is that a very low percentage of VET graduates intend to search for a job after their graduation. Some 16% of ICT students, 14% of textile students, 21% of tourism students intend to search for a job after graduation. The figure is higher in the construction sector, 42%. In general, the figures in the table indicate that the expected behavior of students after graduation is different in the construction and somehow more similar among the other three sectors, except for the high level of university orientation in the ICT. The ICT students have in general a better academic performance compared to other VET profiles. This can increase their possibilities of having a wining university application.

Expectations on Employment Opportunities

Graph 47 presents the percentages of the students' answers on the expectations of higher employment opportunities of the VET graduates compared to their counterparts from general education background. The same question was asked to trainees with a slight modification. They were just asked to evaluate whether attending the course would increase their employment chances. In the overall VET system, 80% of the students and 85% of the trainees claim that they have higher chances. About 11% of the students are not sure if their VET attendance is worth more than the general education, while about 9% think that they do not have higher chances compared to general high school graduates. With regard to trainees, 12.5% are not sure whether attending the course has increased their employment possibilities, while 3% think that their chances of employment have not increased afterwards. At the sector level, the figures are lower than in the overall system. As the graph shows, the percentage of those who think that attending VET

Graph 47. Do you think VET graduates have higher chances for employment?



increases employment possibilities in the textile sector is considerably lower than that of the other sectors (51%), and above 70% in the other three sectors. The percentage of discouraged, i.e., those who think they don't have higher chances or those who are not sure are also higher in the textile sector. The ICT sector offers more optimistic figures, showing the lowest percentage of those who think they have no better chances, although about 16% of the ICT students are not sure. These latter figures may be partly explained by the higher intentions of the ICT students to attend further studies.

The percentage of the pessimistic, stating that their chances are not higher, varies from 7-8% in the two groups. In line with the finding on employment opportunities, the sector comparison indicates that a higher percentage of ICT students think they have higher probabilities of being self-employed. This percentage is also quite high for the tourism sector (81%). The students in the construction sector have responded at a different trend, a lower level of self-employment possibilities, and more uncertainty when comparing themselves to general high school graduates.

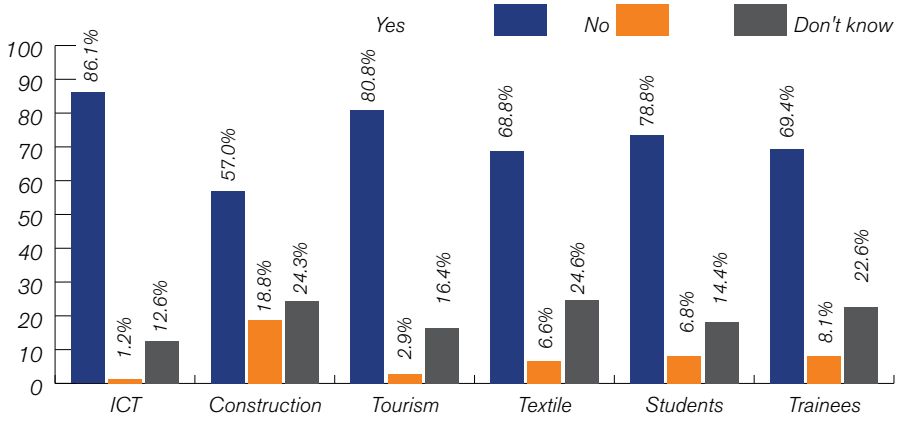
Expectations on Self-Employment

With regard to the possibilities of starting up a business upon completion of studies the situation is slightly different (Graph 48). A higher percentage of VET students, 79%, think that their chances for starting up a business are higher than chances of those who graduate from a gymnasium, while 69% of the trainees think their chances increase after training/course completion.

Expectations on the Possible Employers

Table 11 presents the expectations of the VET students and trainees about their employment. Overall, a higher percentage of trainees expect to find employment in the private sector, 56.4%, while about 22% of them think they will start their own business. VET students are somehow equally divided between the alternatives of

Graph 48. Do you think VET graduates have higher chances for starting up a new business?



working in a public institution/enterprise, a private enterprise, and starting up their own business.

There is a lot of variation to the employment expectations in the four selected sectors. About 52% of students in textile expect to start up their own business and 52% of students in tourism studies expect to work in a private enterprise. ICT students think they are more likely to work in a public enterprise, while in the other sector this percentage varies from 27 to 31%. It is interesting to note that although textile students are less likely to expect employment in a private enterprise, trainees in the same field are most likely to do so. Students in construction are almost equally separated into the three employment groups.

they would look for a job when finishing the course. There is a different picture in VET students. Twenty two percent of them think they would find a job within six months, a lower percentage compared to that of the trainees; 23% think that it would only take a month to find a job; 32% think it would take about a year, and 22% think it would take longer.

Sector-wise, a higher percentage of students in the tourism sector, 40%, think that they would find a job within a month, compared to 23% of students in ICT and textile, and 22% of those in construction who expect the same. In addition, a higher percentage of students of the tourism sector expect to find a job within 6 months. Those who expect one year or longer transition period are the students of textile (68%), construction (51%) and ICT (46%).

Table 11. In which area you think you may find employment?

	ICT	Construction	Tourism	Textile	Students	Trainees
In a public enterprise	37.5%	30.8%	30.3%	27.2%	33.8%	12.8%
In a private enterprise	27.0%	31.7%	51.9%	19.5%	32.3%	56.4%
Self-employed	27.6%	32.9%	16.4%	52.4%	30.1%	21.8%
Other	8.0%	4.6%	1.4%	1.0%	3.8%	9.0%

Expected Duration of Transition from School to Work

The expectations on the transition period from school/course to work are presented in Table 12. 49% of the trainees think they will find a job within six months, 18% within a month, 19% within a year and about 11% of them think that it would probably take longer. About 4% of the trainees do not think

Factors that Improve Employability

The students and trainees were asked to select from a list the two most prominent factors that may have an impact in improving their employability. The results are presented in Table 13. Overall, both groups have selected having better working tools and equipment as the most important factor. The trainees have selected a better

Table 12. How long it will take you to find a job after finishing school/the course?

	ICT	Construction	Tourism	Textile	Students	Trainees
Within a month	22.9%	21.8%	40.4%	23.4%	22.6%	17.5%
Within six months	29.5%	24.8%	35.9%	7.7%	21.6%	48.8%
Within a year	19.9%	28.3%	9.2%	12.5%	31.9%	18.8%
Longer	25.6%	22.6%	13.4%	55.7%	22.2%	11.3%
I will not search for a job	2.1%	2.4%	1.1%	.6%	1.6%	3.8%

collaboration of centers with employment and career offices as the second most important factor affecting their employability, followed by longer internships and better teaching methods. For the students, of VSs the second most important factor is that of having more practice hours. In addition, they claim that it is of importance to have longer internships in the business environment, more qualified teachers and better teaching methods.

There is a different picture in the sectors under consideration. ICT students have claimed that the use of computers and Internet is the most important factor, followed by better working tools and equipment. They have provided a similar score on more practice hours and better teaching methods, 33.6 and 33.4% respectively. Construction students highlight the importance of a better infrastructure of the school (34.6%), more practice hours (30%) and better teaching methods (28%). The students in the tourism field have also selected in a majority the better working tools and equipment (40%). The second most important factor to their employability is the improvement of the teaching methods that was selected by 36% of students in the tourism profiles. Longer periods of internship in the businesses, more practice hours and more qualified teachers and instructors have also scored a high percentage. In difference from the previous results, the textile sector students have stressed the importance of more qualified teachers as the most prominent factor, and the improvement of the working tools and equipment as of similar importance. The use of computers and Internet is ranked the third within the factors selected by the textile students, and the better teaching methods have a similar score (38.6% vs. 37.2%). Better school infrastructure and more practice hours have also been selected by a considerable percentage of students.

7.2 Results of Teachers and Instructors' Survey

Evaluation of Students/Trainees' Knowledge Adequacy

Teachers/instructors were asked to give their opinion on whether the students/

Table 13. The most important factors for employability

	ICT	Construction	Tourism	Textile	Students	Trainees
Better school infrastructure	5.5%	34.6%	11.6%	29.1%	17.9%	7.7%
Better teaching methods	33.4%	27.9%	35.9%	37.2%	24.3%	25.6%
More qualified teachers/ trainers	19.1%	21.0%	27.0%	52.8%	26.2%	7.7%
Better working tools and equipment	37.7%	30.4%	40.1%	52.2%	35.9%	48.7%
Raw materials	9.8%	16.1%	12.7%	9.1%	15.5%	NA
More practice hours	33.6%	29.7%	31.9%	30.2%	32.1%	NA
Adequate curricula	23.2%	7.0%	17.7%	10.9%	16.3%	17.9%
Use of computers and Internet	40.9%	16.1%	9.2%	38.6%	19.1%	14.1%
Better counselling for employment	19.5%	13.5%	17.1%	25.3%	14.3%	14.1%
Longer internships in the business environment	28.0%	27.1%	34.5%	5.9%	27.1%	30.8%
Better collaboration of schools and businesses	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	41.0%
Better collaboration of schools with employment and career offices	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	21.8%

**NA - Not asked*

Table 14. Do your students/trainees have the adequate knowledge to start working?

	Teachers		Instructors	
	N	**%**	**N**	**%**
Yes	181	85.4	66	97.1
No	9	4.2	1	1.5
Don't know	22	10.4	1	1.5
Total	212	100.0	68	100.0

trainees that attend studies/courses at their schools/centers have the adequate knowledge in order to start working in their profession upon completion. Figures in Table 14 indicate that a higher percentage of instructors have provided a positive answer, 97%, compared to about 85% of the teachers. About 10% of the teachers cannot judge the knowledge level of their students and that may be explained by the inclusion of the teachers of non-professional subjects in the sample. Four percent of the teachers think that their students do not have required knowledge to start working.

Relevance of Knowledge Provided at School for Employability

In addition, teachers/instructors were asked to evaluate in an increasing scale from 1 to 5 the relevance of the knowledge provided at school/center for the respective profession as well as to evaluate the performance of the professional orientation and career counseling at school/center level. Table 14 summarizes their answers on these two questions. With regards to knowledge relevance, approximately two thirds of teachers and instructors think that their students/trainees are equipped at a high level with the relevant knowledge at school/center. A low percentage, 7% of teachers and 13% of the instructors, thinks that the knowledge their students and trainees gain

Table 15. Evaluation of the knowledge relevance and performance of professional orientation and career counseling services

	Knowledge Relevance				Professional Orientation and Career Counseling			
	Teachers		Instructors		Teachers		Instructors	
	N	**%**	**N**	**%**	**N**	**%**	**N**	**%**
A little	2	.9	1	1.5	6	2.8	2	2.9
Somehow	52	24.5	13	19.1	63	29.9	13	18.8
Quite	143	67.5	45	66.2	123	58.3	41	59.4
Highly	15	7.1	9	13.2	19	9.0	13	18.8
Total	**212**	**100.0**	**68**	**100.0**	**211**	**100.0**	**69**	**100.0**

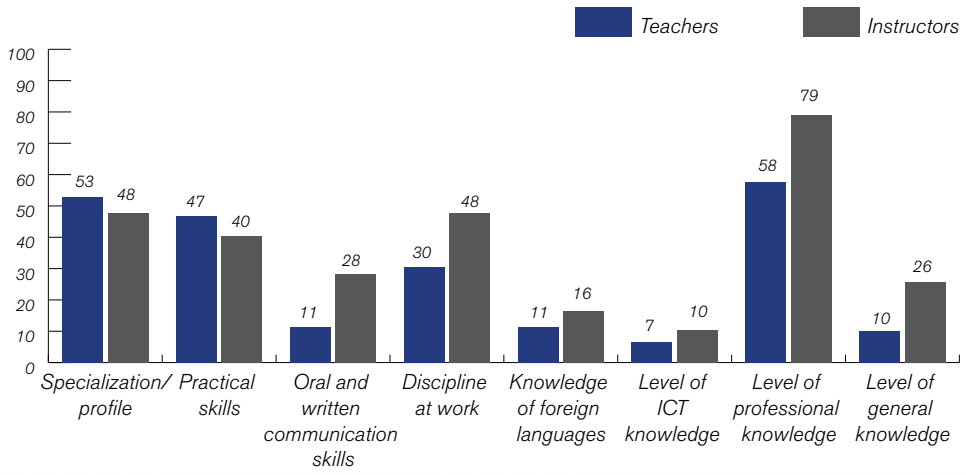
at school/center is highly relevant to their respective profession/workplace. However, it is concerning to note that a considerable percentage of teachers and instructors (about 25% of the teachers and 19% of the instructors) think that the knowledge is of medium relevance. The reasons behind the lack or low level of relevance need further investigation and may constitute the grounds for the design of effective interventions.

The performance of career offices and professional orientation follows a similar trend. The majority of teachers and instructors, about 60% of them, have evaluated their performance as of a quite good level (4). Thirty percent% of teachers think that the assistance provided to students by counseling and orientation services at school/center level is somehow good (3). Only 9% of teachers and 19% of instructors think that professional orientation and career-counseling services are performing at a very high level.

Factors That Affect Labor Market Insertion

Graph 49 presents the selection of teachers and instructors on the two most prominent factors that affect labor market insertion of recent graduates. As it may be noted, 79% of the instructors and 58% of the teachers think that the level of professional knowledge is the most important factor. The second most important factor was the field of specialization and profile, which is expected given some of the professions have a higher demand than others, probably because of their crosscutting nature in terms of employment in different sectors, and also because of the lack of professionals in certain profiles. It is interesting to note that the third most important factor for the teachers is the level of practical skills, but for the instructors the discipline at work has been selected by the same percentage as the importance of specialization or profile, and practical skills are ranked next. Instructors tend to give quite higher importance to the factors of common knowledge, communication skills and foreign languages compared to the importance given to them by teachers.

Graph 49. Which are the two most important factors that determine labor market insertion?



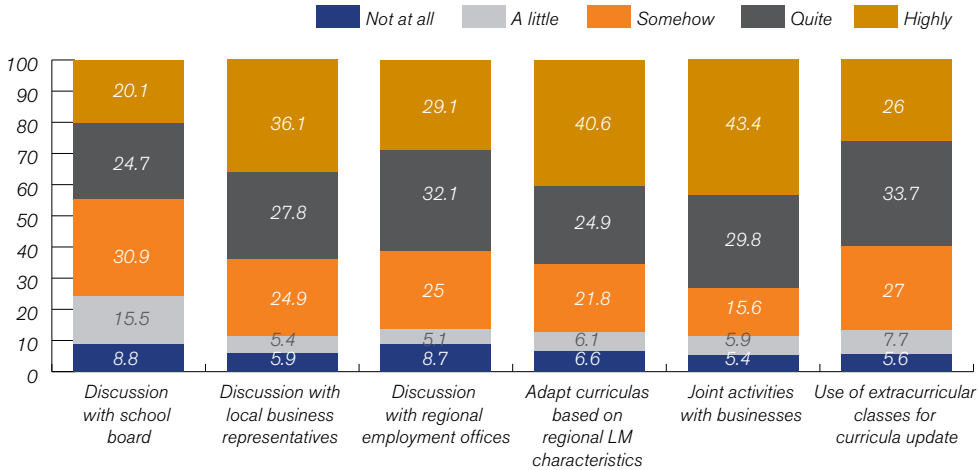
Effectiveness of Approaches to Match the School Curricula with the Labor Market Needs

The teachers were also asked to evaluate on a scale from 1 to 5 the effectiveness of several approaches for matching the school curricula with the labor market needs (Graph 49). All the listed approaches have been evaluated at a medium to high effectiveness. The discussion with the school board has scored highest percentage at the two lowest values; about one fourth of the respondents think that this is not an effective way to design course curricula that match labor market needs. This finding may be explained by a formal rather than effective structure, and boards of VET schools operate as such in most of the cases. The organization of joint activities with business was selected as the most effective approach by 43% of the teachers. The adaptation of curricula to match the regional labor market needs is also ranked highly by a considerable percentage of teachers (41%). Although not presented in the table, about 48% of the teachers provide a medium to high evaluation to the claim that the curricula are predefined and they do not use any of these methods to update and upgrade them. This last finding points out an important issue that could highly affect the employability of graduates. In most cases, teachers repeat the same subject program year after year, and almost half of them do not translate and match the new curricula each year with the labor market needs.

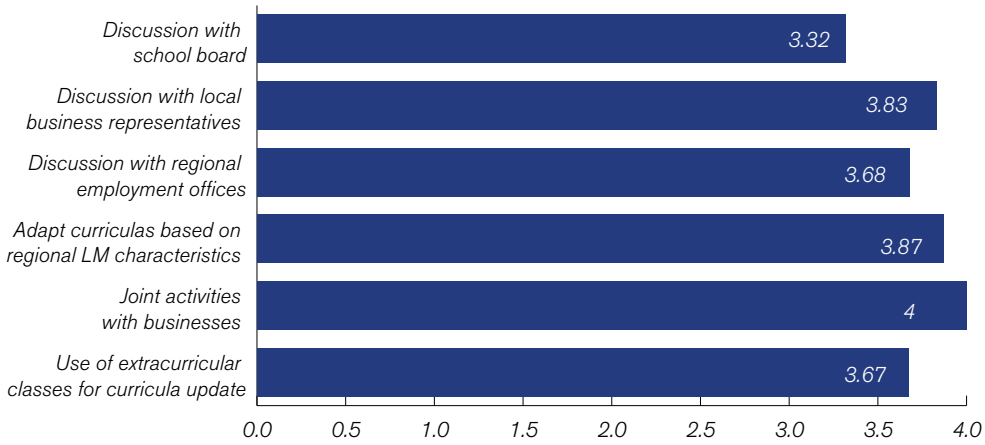
To complement these figures, Graph 51 presents the means of the evaluations of the teachers for the listed approaches. The joint activities with businesses have resulted in the highest mean of 4, while the assessment of regional labor market needs and the upgrade of the curricula accordingly has scored an average of 3.9 points. The discussion of curricula with local businesses has also been evaluated at a similarly high average, 3.8 points.

Instructors have been asked to evaluate the effectiveness of a slightly different set of factors, which were adapted to the particularities of trainings and management of the vocational centers. The results are presented in Table 16 and Graph

Graph 50. Teachers' evaluation of effectiveness of approaches to match curricula with the labor market needs (%)



Graph 51. Teachers' mean evaluations of effectiveness of approaches to match curricula



52. The instructors have evaluated the effectiveness of updating the curricula by taking into consideration regional labor market needs (55%), the possibility to adapt course programs of successful courses in- and outside of the country (53%), and the discussion with local business representatives (51%), as the three most

Table 16. Instructors' evaluation of effectiveness of approaches to match curricula with the labor market needs (%)

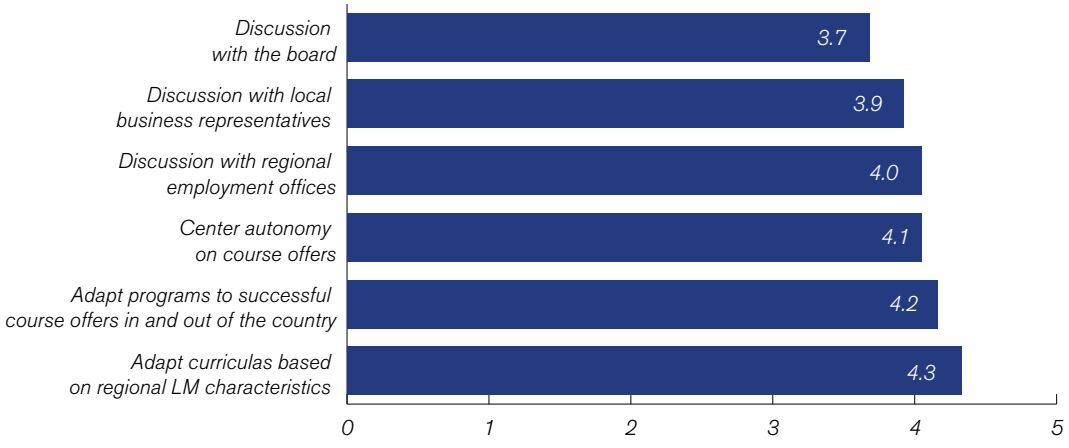
	Not at all	A little	Somehow	Quite	Highly
Discussion with school board	**6.3**	**14.3**	**20.6**	**22.2**	**36.5**
Discussion with local business representatives	9.8	4.9	19.7	14.8	50.8
Discussion with regional employment offices	3.2	7.9	19.0	20.6	49.2
Adapt curricula based on regional LM characteristics	1.6	3.1	10.9	29.7	54.7
Center autonomy on course offers	5.1	10.2	8.5	27.1	49.2
Adapt course programs of successful courses in and out of the country	**4.9**	**1.6**	**18.0**	**23.0**	**52.5**

effective approaches towards successful labor market insertion. The evaluation means show the same trend. All listed approached has been scored as of more than average effectiveness. Again, although somehow important, discussion with the school board has resulted in the lowest mean, pointing out the need to improve their performance as well as to rely more on other more effective approaches. In difference from the teachers' evaluations, the discussion with regional employment offices has resulted in a higher average confirming previous findings in this section, and drawing attention to the need to strengthen institutional networks and collaboration between them as a more effective way towards curricula update.

is no clear trend on the ranking of each activity, which reflects that teachers have different opinions on the collaboration with the businesses for the listed activities. The highest percentage in the table is that of a very high level of collaboration with businesses for the negotiations on student practices. This option has been selected by 32% of the teachers. Some 27% of them have also claimed that they collaborate with businesses in order to establish steady relations with them as well as to strengthen the existing ones.

The lowest levels of collaboration are reached on the collaboration with businesses about design and adaption of the curricula of professional subjects and the training of

Graph 52. Instructors' mean evaluations of effectiveness of approaches to match curricula



Level of Collaboration of Vocational Schools for Activities that Improve Performance

Table 17 presents the evaluation of the teachers on the level of collaboration of vocational schools for several activities that would improve their performance. There

teachers on professional innovations. Thirty five percent and 38% of the teachers have provided a very low or low evaluation for the collaboration with the businesses on these issues, respectively. This low level of collaboration is at the core of skills mismatch and negatively affects the employability of the graduates. On the other hand, 38%

and 45% of the teachers have provided a high or very high evaluation on these issues, which may be explained by the high level of school and profile variation regarding the relationship with businesses.

of students' practices resulting in a higher average (3.7), followed by the establishment of sustainable relations (3.5), while the other statements have an almost equal average (about 3 points).

Table 17. How would you rank the level collaboration of your institution with businesses in relation to the following?

	Very low	Low	Somehow	High	Very high
Design of strategic plan	15.3	18.9	27.6	23.0	15.3
Discuss, design and adapt curricula of professional subjects	21.3	13.7	26.4	20.3	18.3
Training of teachers on professional innovations	19.5	18.0	17.0	27.5	18.0
Negotiate on students' practices	3.4	13.8	23.6	27.6	31.5
Negotiate on graduates' employment	7.0	23.5	27.5	25.5	16.5
Establish sustainable relations with businesses	3.5	21.0	21.0	27.5	27.0

With regard to collaboration aiming the design of the schools' strategic plan, 28% of the teachers have selected the average level, 23% a high level of collaboration, and 19% of them have selected a low level of collaboration. The remaining 30% are those who think that the level of collaboration is either very low or very high and are equally split into the two groups.

The responses also indicate that there is collaboration with regard to negotiation of graduates' employment, although 31% of the teachers claim that their school is not involved much into negotiating, and 28% think that this collaboration is at average levels. The averages of the evaluations indicate the same trend, with the negotiation

Recommendations for Decision-makers and Managers to Improve Skill Match with the Labor Market Needs

Teachers and instructors were asked to select the most relevant recommendations for the decision-makers and school/ center managers in order to improve skills match with the labor market needs. Table 18 presents a summary of their answers. Teachers have selected as the two most important recommendations the organization of more activities in collaboration with the businesses (78.4%), the improvement of the school infrastructure and raw materials (77.4%) and more practice hours at the business sites (76%). These are also the most important recommendations provided

Table 18. What would you recommend to school managers and decision-makers in order to increase compatibility of skills gained at school/center with those needed in the labor market?

	Teachers		Instructors	
	N	**%**	**N**	**%**
Better infrastructure and raw materials	161	77.4	48	68.6
Programs more oriented towards special professions	76	36.5	24	34.3
Studies more oriented towards professional theories	21	10.1	13	18.6
More practice hours at school/center	48	23.1	28	40.0
More practice hours at businesses	158	76.0	42	60.0
More rigor in program implementation	24	11.5	3	4.3
Increased control over students' knowledge (exams/projects, tests)	22	10.6	12	17.1
More activities directly related to the business	163	78.4	44	62.9
Add subjects/knowledge on entrepreneurship and SME management	41	19.7	18	25.7
Improve the professional orientation of the students	74	35.6	NA	NA
More assistance in program design	NA		14	20.0

**NA - Not asked*

by the instructors as well, although at a different order and about 10 percentage points lower. Programs more oriented towards special professions and more practice hours at school/center are also recommended by a considerable percentage of teachers and instructors. The least selected recommendations are those related to more tests and exams to control students/trainees knowledge and more rigors in program implementation. It is also important to note that about one fifth of the teachers and one fourth of the instructors think that there is need to add subjects/ knowledge about entrepreneurship, start-ups, and small-medium enterprise (SME) management.

When asked about the improvements that schools need most, teachers have revealed that schools need quite a wide range of interventions. Table 19 presents the percentages of the evaluations from 1 (no need) to 5 (very high need) of the level of improvement needed and the mean evaluation for each item in the list. The percentages in the table indicate that teachers have rated the improvement of workstation conditions and of the lab conditions as the most urgent ones. The very high need for improvement of the conditions of workstation is selected by about 43% of the teachers. The evaluations of the lab conditions follow almost the same

percentage, with 42.6% of teachers that have provided the highest evaluation (5) and 26% to have also claimed that the level of intervention should be high (4). Improvement or supply of tools and equipment used during practice hours was very highly evaluated by 39% of the teachers, and another 30% of them think that their improvement is pretty much necessary. Possibilities of teachers for continuous trainings also seem to be at a low level, given that 67% of the respondents have highly evaluated the need for improvement (4 and 5).

Less improvement is required for the school buildings, quality of school management, the level of school autonomy, class conditions, and the personalization of teaching methods in accordance with student needs. Based on teachers' evaluations, the interventions in the other areas seem vital.

The mean evaluations for the listed factors are higher than 3, except for the improvements needed in the use of information systems for school management. The means vary from 3 to 4, indicating more than average need for intervention. School autonomy, lab conditions, tools and equipment used in practice, number of students in each class, teachers' dedicated workspaces, possibilities of teachers for continuous training, the compatibility of modules with current technology, and matching programs with labor market needs have resulted in the highest averages.

These items and a few more were also evaluated by the instructors of the vocational centers. Almost all the factors have resulted in averages higher than 3, and low standard deviations from the means (1.1-1.5). The majority of instructors, 55%, have highly stressed the importance of continuous training for them (Graph 53). In the opinion of 41.5% of the instructors, tools and

Graph 53. How much improvement does your center need in the following areas?

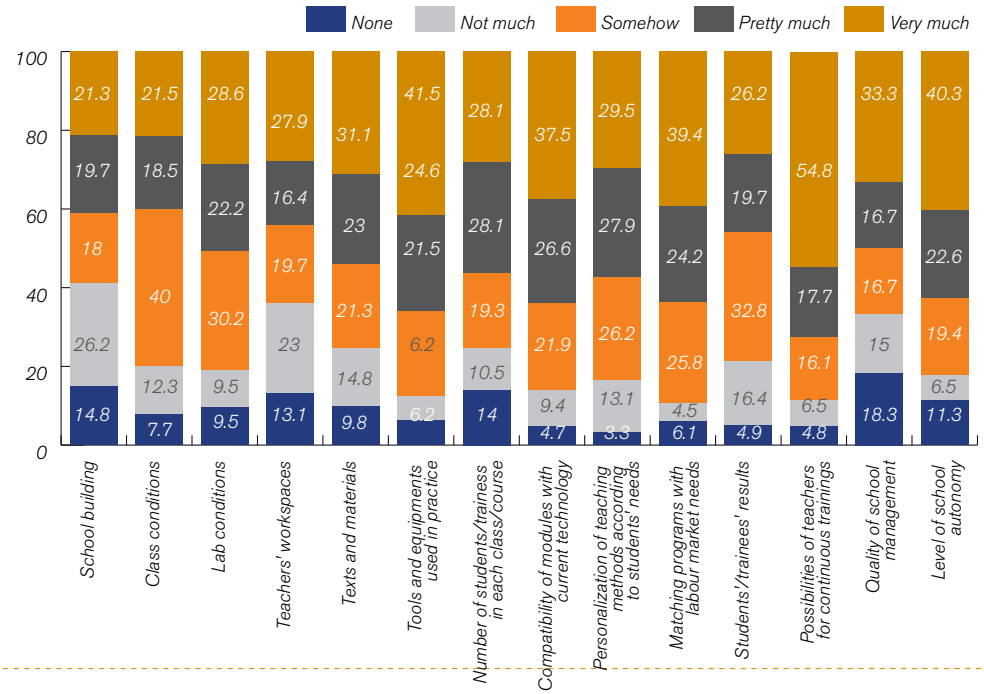


Table 19. How much improvement does your school need in the following areas?

	None	Not much	Some	Pretty much	Very much	Mean
School building	24.9	17.7	17.1	13.3	27.1	3.00
Class conditions	17.6	10.9	22.3	23.8	25.4	3.28
Lab conditions	6.4	7.4	17.6	26.1	42.6	3.91
Teacher's workspaces	14.5	12.3	25.1	24.6	23.5	3.93
Texts and materials	2.6	3.7	29.6	30.2	33.9	3.30
Tools and equipment used in practice	5.5	6.6	19.2	30.2	38.5	3.89
Number of students/ trainees in each class/ course	10.3	13.3	20.5	24.1	31.8	3.90
Compatibility of modules with current technology	4.8	8.5	29.8	29.8	27.1	3.69
Personalization of teaching methods according to students' needs	6.7	22.2	34.4	19.4	17.2	3.54
Matching programs with labor market needs	2.2	11.4	26.1	30.4	29.9	3.66
Students/trainees' results	2.2	8.6	34.9	34.9	19.4	3.18
Possibilities of teachers for continuous trainings	2.0	6.1	25.0	29.6	37.2	3.74
Quality of school management	21.7	21.2	21.7	16.8	18.5	3.61
Level of school autonomy	13.7	20.2	26.8	21.3	18.0	3.94
Use of information systems for school management	8.0	14.8	33.5	23.9	19.9	2.89
Workstation conditions	8.2	4.3	16.3	28.3	42.9	3.10
Raw materials used in practice	8.2	8.8	22.0	28.0	33.0	3.33

equipment used in practice do also need a high level of improvement. Surprisingly, and in difference from findings on teachers, the level of center autonomy is selected as the third most important factor in terms of suggested improvement interventions. Another very important factor that needs high improvement is the matching of the programs with labor market needs, a finding that goes hand in hand with the improvement needed in the autonomy of the school related to program and curricula design. The compatibility of modules with current technological developments is also listed among the highly important interventions.

Section 8. Employers as Part of VET Ecosystem

Most of the analysis conducted on Albanian VET system revealed that there is a weak link and/or participation of the private sector. VET providers consider employers as reluctant to be part of the VSD due to labor cost and time needed for interns, while the majority of private sector representatives (based on sector analysis findings) have generally a bad impression about VET, but at the same time are not informed about the VET offer.

Employers' Participation in VET System Design

Actual VET legislative framework in Albania foresees private sector involvement in all stages of skills development, but in reality employers' representation is just formal and not actively contributing to the process. At policy development, as representatives of social partners, employers participate in National VET Council and National Employment Council. These councils, supposed to consult skills and employment policy development, are not regularly gathered and there is no evidence of these bodies input in policy development. Nevertheless, as supported by key informants' interviews, there are cases of employers' organization active participation in policy development, like the National Strategy on Skills and Employment 2015-2020.

The National Employment Service gather's yearly through the Skills Needs Analysis (SNA) information on employers' needs for skills to inform the vocational education and training public offer design. The list of vocational qualifications should be updated based on this information. Although the information received through this tool is a full scan of the sectors' need for skills and employment, by the time data are computed, needs may become obsolete in a dynamic environment. That is why the system is being redesigned with the help of SDC-funded Skills for Employment Project, introducing an innovative tool to provide decision makers with clear, accurate and differentiating data on the labor market short, medium and long term needs, as declared by the project managers.

Textile sectoral analysis recalled the need for VET provider's curricula update together with the private sector and suggest that VET providers should create those modalities that target employees of the sector needing the skills' update. Employers participate in frame curricula design by being part of the ad-hoc groups created by NAVETQ when discussing the vocational component. A new initiative is being introduced with the technical assistance of RISI Project, the

Sector Skills Committees as permanent bodies responsible for vocational curricula review for sectors-related vocational qualifications. As both project managers and NAVETQ directors claim, the initiative will be piloted for tourism sector.

Employers' Involvement at VET Providers' Development

As previously mentioned, all VET providers have a Board, with a multi-stakeholders membership, to support the provider strategic development and management, but these bodies have a general passive role, a statement that is confirmed from the survey data.

Employers' Involvement at Work-Based Learning (Professional Practice Provision)

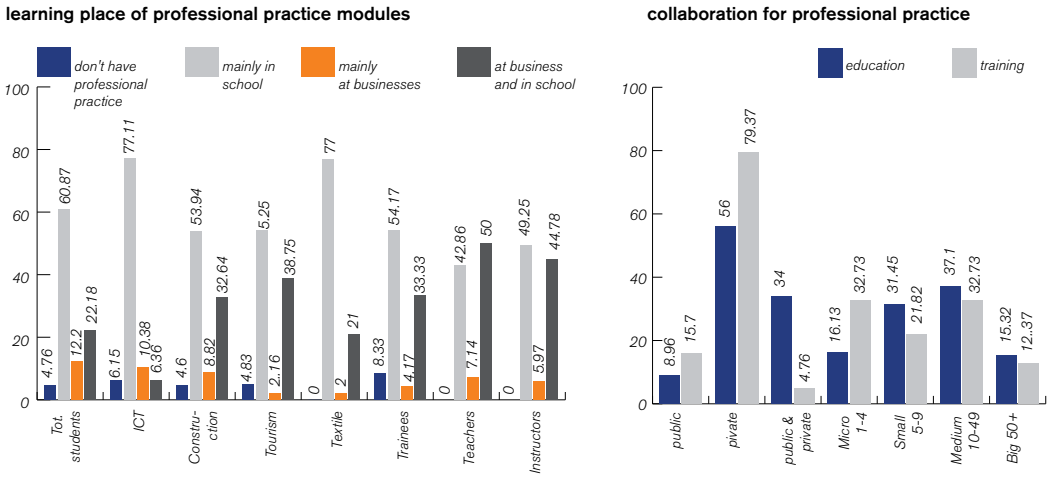
In the national frame, curricula are suggested that professional practice could be developed at the local enterprises. Even though it is desirable, it is not a common practice. MoSWY officials declare that, ideally, the collaboration would work since tripartite is formally part of decision-making at MoSWY, but is difficult due to employers' (especially private) mindset; their development phase and insecurity about their future plans; enterprises willingness, readiness and availability to invest in staff training and development. The legal framework[38] in place regulates the internship agreement and offers incentives for organizations accommodating VET students, but the implementation is minimal.

The latest analysis of the work based learning practices in Albanian VET system (Aliko, 2015), revealed that there are some anomalies in this process and the quality or the learning outcomes are questionable. More specifically, (i) the teaching load dedicated for practical modules is limited; (ii) often what the students do/are involved at the business premises does not correspond with the practice module content and learning objectives; (iii) the employers do not have the necessary trained staff to perform the mentors tasks and very often "impose" their own training strategy; (iv) professional practice is mainly delivered scattered in 1-2 days per week and does not allow the progressive involvement of student. Delivering the practice at businesses in bloc of around 4-5 weeks would be more effective, but the schools face difficulties in adjusting this arrangement with the rest of the modules and subjects; (v) students' evaluation for practical modules should come from business but no formal procedures are in place; (vi) there is a discrimination among students – the best performing are sent at the best organizations, there are even cases of the lowest results students not being sent at all but conducting the practical modules at the school; (vii) there is a difference among providers on how practical modules are carried out, while the certificate the students get is the same; (viii) there are cases of students being exploited for informal jobs; and (ix) the rapidly increased enrollment hampered the possibility and quality of work-based learning.

According to the students' opinion participating in survey, the professional practice modules are developed mostly in school, the same for trainees. While teachers and instructors declare quite an optimistic view of the reality, 50% of the teachers and 45% of the instructors state that practical modules are developed at businesses and in school/center. Sector-oriented analyses

38 Decision of Council of Ministers, No. 500, dated 22.05.2013 http://www.vet.al/files/ligje%20etj/VKM%20500%20dt%2022%205%202013%20Per%20praktikat0001.pdf

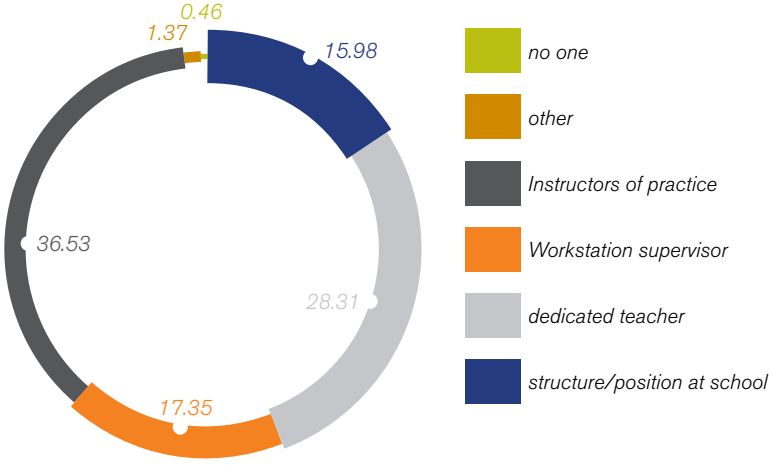
Graph 54: Characteristics of professional practices at the businesses



reveal that ICT and textile profiles develop practice modules mainly in school, while tourism and construction-related profiles have a better balance of business and school practice.

Schools and centers collaborate mostly with private companies for professional practices. Vocational schools, cooperate also with public companies. During last years, MoSWY signed agreements for students' practices and internships with Electrical Energy Distribution Operator, Ministry of Defense, Department of Public Administration (for interns at Municipalities), Sewerage and waste management, Bank of Albania, etc., even though, as articulated by MoSWY officials interviewed, after the

Graph 55: Responsibility on professional practice at vocational schools



first slot of students, the readiness of public companies to collaborate decreased.

Responsibility on the arrangements with business regarding practical modules to be delivered as work-based learning (WBL) varies in different providers. The most frequent options in vocational schools are that professional practice teachers (36.53%) or a dedicated instructor (28.31%) are held responsible for WBL. In only 16% of cases, teachers declare that there is a structure or a position at the school responsible for these arrangements, while in VTCs almost 68% of instructors say that this structure exists. Generally, VTCs are more related with businesses, because they work closely with the employment offices and have the possibility to link with local employers.

Students/trainees and teachers/instructors were asked on different aspects of WBL and below are analyzed their different perspectives as well as variety among profiles and modalities.

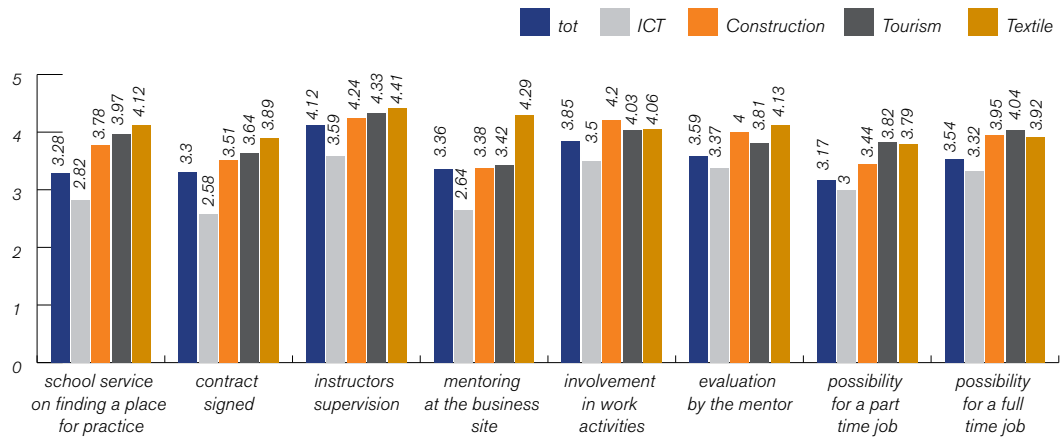
The WBL aspect the students are more satisfied with is the instructors' supervision and the possibility to be involved in hands-on activities at the business site. ICT profile rates the lowest at all the aspects of the WBL. This profile was nationally dilated in 2010 in 12 vocational schools and the relationships with businesses are still to be developed, especially in the regions outside Tirana where the sector is not highly developed. Textile profile is rated the highest in most of the dimensions, followed by tourism and construction.

Students of textile are more satisfied with the instructors' supervisors, the mentors' role at the business site and what the school is doing to find a practice place for them. This might be as a result of the small number of students compared with other profiles and the readiness the private sector companies have to receive students for practice. Both textile and tourism profile are mainly provided in schools assisted by AIBiz Project that have introduced the PASO position covering the relation with businesses function. Sector analysis revealed that there is a high collaboration between VET providers and enterprises in textile and garment, which assign responsible staff for interns or students during practice. This might explain the students' high satisfaction with mentoring at the business site. Among the good examples in fostering WBL in the sector is NABER Company. NABER is included in all levels of VSD, starting from curricula design, delivering VET by accommodating students for internships, assisting the providers with consumables and eventually showing the readiness to employ the graduates.

In the tourism sector, provider capacities for introducing WBL are being raised in the frame of Erasmus+ "Apprenticeship Schemes for Youth Employability in Albania" Project, aiming to introduce the dual system in tourism sector, piloting the initiative in Tourism and Hospitality School in Tirana and Kamza MFC. As project managers declare in key informants' interview, the sector has shown a high readiness as well, especially the big enterprises in hospitality.

Teachers and instructors' opinion on professional practice might be useful to identify the most crucial points of professional practice development, as an important activity for the VET students and trainees' skills development. For both categories, the VET provider does not cover insurance costs of the student or trainee. This insurance is obligatory and required by the state authorities in the frame of legal framework on safety at work and is mostly paid by the students themselves, thus increasing their costs of education/ training. Furthermore, latest regulation on

Graph 56. Students' satisfaction with professional practice



Source: Students' questionnaire

employment relations requires that even interns or students during professional practice have to be declared at the tax office and the social insurance system and the enterprise has to pay the social insurance. This impacted dramatically in the reduction of students' placements at the companies.[39]

Business awareness is indicated as problematic in vocational education, while in VTC it seems that the situation is more optimistic. Almost 82% of instructors declare that business welcome the trainees for business practices. In VTCs, as previously stated, the institution is responsible for professional practice coordination, while at schools this is covered by the professional practice teachers. Both teachers and instructors state that attendance level is high and this might be also as a result of professional practice being obligatory.

Reflection of Students and Trainees on VET Choices

Both students and trainees were asked whether they would make again the same choices if offered the possibility for a fresh start. The absolute majority of participants reconfirm their choice on VET system, with trainees being in advantage. Striking is the fact that students, although with a predisposition to be oriented toward VET, will not choose always the same provider or the same profile. There might be around 13% of "pro VET" students not satisfied with what the provider is doing for their vocational skills development and around 8% more willing to choose another profile. Students in Construction are less likely to choose the VET path again, while textile students are more willing to reconfirm their choice for a vocational qualification. Trainees are supposed to be much more satisfied with the VTC compared with students, since 91% of them would choose the same provider again compared with 69% of students. ICT students are less satisfied with the provider compared with other categories of learners. Among students, tourism students

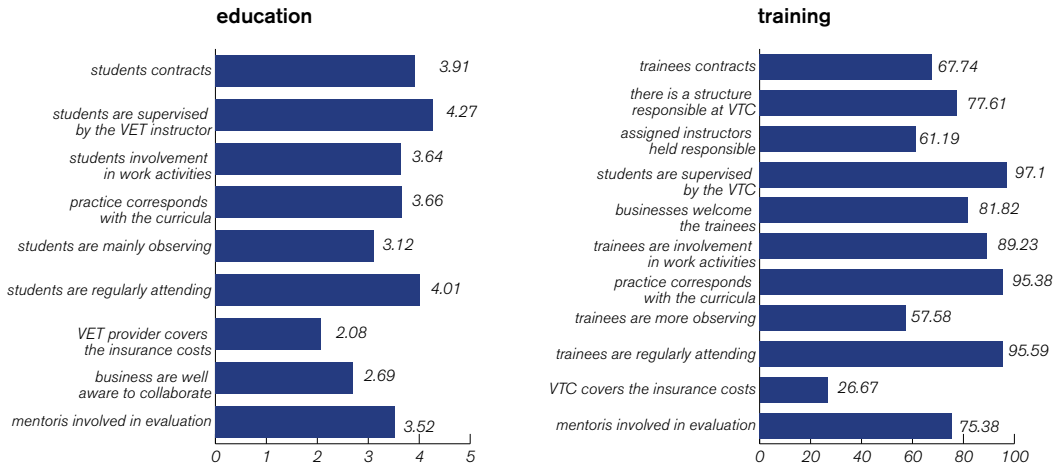
39 Findings presented on "Consultation of the Roadmap for the Implementation of the Apprenticeship Scheme in the Albanian Secondary Vocational Education" Workshop, MoES, 16th of December, 2015,

are supposed to be more satisfied with the provider and much more satisfied with the profile they have chosen. Although they have a high predisposition toward VET, Textile students are the least satisfied with the profile chosen. Around 40% of them would choose another VET profile if offered the chance.

Reflection of Students and Trainees on VET Choices

Both students and trainees were asked whether they would make again the same choices if offered the possibility for a fresh start. The absolute majority of participants reconfirm their choice on VET system, with trainees being in advantage. Striking

Graph 57. Facts on professional practice in VET



Source: Teachers and Instructors' questionnaire

Business awareness is indicated as problematic in vocational education, while in VTC it seems that the situation is more optimistic. Almost 82% of instructors declare that business welcome the trainees for business practices. In VTCs, as previously stated, the institution is responsible for professional practice coordination, while at schools this is covered by the professional practice teachers. Both teachers and instructors state that attendance level is high and this might be also as a result of professional practice being obligatory.

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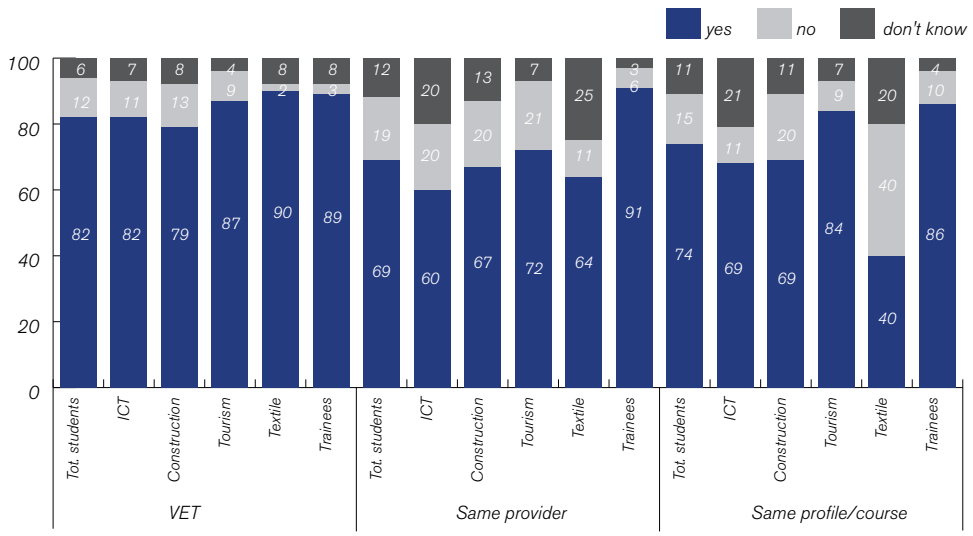
Graph 58. Would you make again the same choices if offered the possibility for a fresh start?



provider compared with other categories of learners. Among students, tourism students are supposed to be more satisfied with the provider and much more satisfied with the profile they have chosen. Although they have a high predisposition toward VET, Textile students are the least satisfied with the profile chosen. Around 40% of them would choose another VET profile if offered the chance.

Section 9. Conclusions

VET is a national priority in Albania and the system is under reformation since 2012, with the ultimate goal of serving to labor market and social needs. MoSWY and its subordinate institutions and partners are led by the NESS 2014-2020, coordinating policies on vocational education, vocational training and employment. A new VET law is under preparation to envisage the vision for this comprehensive system.

VET system upgrade is currently addressing the internal efficiency and external effectiveness elements impacting the VET quality. The private sector in this reform is considered a strategic partner and is aspired to have a more active role in all phases of vocational skills development, from VET policy development to VET provision, to ensure the graduates employability.

Currently, vocational qualifications in Albania can be usually acquired by attending vocational education programs or vocational training courses, and in rare cases by applying for recognition of learning acquired abroad. Recognition of informal and non-formal prior learning is not yet developed. MoSWY midterm plan is to rationalize the VET providers network from 52 to around 13 providers called “schools of excellence”, institutions with a higher status of autonomy, offering a higher variety of VE programs and short-term courses as well.

A total of 12 professional directions, 29 profiles and 20 short-term courses prepare

qualified employees for occupational profiles in ICT, construction, tourism, and textile sectors. Due to low number of students enrolled in each direction and limited human resources and infrastructure, only 20 out of 29 profiles are chosen, some of them the most requested by respective or related economic sectors.

VET curricula is composed by general education and vocational part with the latest organized in a modular structure and based on learning outcomes. Delivering vocational skills development through short-term courses and having a less complex and more decentralized curricula, VT faces fewer challenges compared with vocational education. VE curricula reportedly need intervention in the content and form of curricula, in order to make it more absorbable for VET students. Participants expect an increase of vocational practice hours (especially ICT students) delivered nearby business organizations (teachers' opinion).

There is a high variety among academic staff involved in VET. Qualification and training decreases and experience in industry increases when moving from general education teachers to vocational theory, vocational practice and instructors at the end. Better qualified and industrial experience teachers/instructors, are perceived as better performing from learners. Sector related, ICT students are less satisfied and textile students are more satisfied. Teachers cover form 1 to 4 subjects and there is no clear distinction on the type of subjects they teach. As a result of efficient (although not always effective) human resources utilization there were reported cases of teachers covering subjects not related with the qualification. Majority of vocational teachers declare the need for an updating training nearby business organizations.

There is a higher level of using different teaching and control methods in VE compared with VT, but a dominant application of traditional methods is generally reported. Guest speakers from the private sector are less used limiting the students from widening and updating their knowledge and skills and showing the rather isolated VET providers and their low level of networking. Project assignments are used mostly in tourism and construction sector-related profiles, the same for demonstration and practical examples and group work. Teachers and instructors consider both learning in small groups and project assignments as the most effective teaching methods.

Teachers and instructors reported that they use a variety of sources to access teaching materials, especially vocational theory teachers. Vocational teachers are highly using materials from NAVETQ and general education teachers are using textbooks, while instructors apply self-prepared teaching notes and use online materials. Professional practice teachers are mainly using self-prepared teaching materials, but considering their level of qualification (the lowest among VE teachers), capacity building and presentation of alternative sources of information are crucial.

Foreign literature and teaching materials from peers are reported as the least used sources. Students and trainees report teaching notes and textbooks as the most used learning materials. ICT students have a higher rate of using online materials. Construction and textile students use textbooks. Tourism students mostly use teaching notes.

Equipment and tools used for professional practice were indicated as the most needed intervention by all respondents in a series of factors related to the VET delivery. Other infrastructure-related needs for improvement were workshops and laboratory

conditions (teachers) and classrooms (students). Infrastructure conditions are more problematic in textile profile, for all related dimensions, followed by tourism and hospitality, with the latest indicating consumables, number of students per class and laboratories as the most problematic issue. Construction related profiles are in advantage related with infrastructure.

VET providers level of financial, human resources and academic autonomy is mainly low, but varies among different providers with VTCs being in advantage. VET providers, especially VSs, are operating mostly as isolated institutions and their networking with the local actors or other providers is rather low. Management Boards are mainly formal and only in some selected schools there is a dedicated teacher responsible for the relationship with businesses, but rarely has a reduction of teaching load to accomplish this task.

Professional practice modules are mostly developed in the VET provider premises. VET providers mainly collaborate with private companies, although there are initiatives and cases of contracts signed with big public organizations as well. Generally, VTCs, working closely with the employment offices, are more related with businesses. Students are more satisfied with the teacher/ instructors' supervision and the possibility to be involved in hands-on activities at the business site. ICT profile rates the lowest at all the aspects of the WBL, while textile students rate are generally more satisfied. Both teachers and instructors report that their institution does not cover professional practice costs. Business awareness is indicated as problematic in vocational education, while in VTC it seems that the situation is more optimistic.

While they have the predisposition to be oriented toward VET, VE students will not always choose the same provider or the same profile. Students in construction are less likely to choose the VET path again, while textile students are more willing to reconfirm their choice for a vocational qualification but not for the profile. Trainees are supposed to be much more satisfied with the VTC compared with students. Tourism students are more satisfied with the provider and much more satisfied with the profile they have chosen. ICT students are generally the least satisfied students with what the provider is offering. Being with high results, they have higher expectations of the quality of teaching, curricula and infrastructure.

Increasing VET enrollment has been one of the main objectives in all VET strategies. Nevertheless, VET in Albania remains a non-attractive education opportunity. The interplay of several factors ranging from discouraging facts and figures, prejudice and stereotypes on VET, to (sometimes) contra-productive publicity of VET offer is to be considered. There exists a strong stereotype across gender- and age-groups, regions and sectors that VET is a 'second-hand' education; fit for 'poorly performing', 'problematic' students; with narrow and poor curricula; offering little opportunities for decent jobs; and offering little or no socio-cultural life for their students due to deep gender segregation. As a result the typical VET student in Albania is a mainstream, rural, man's world. VET does not result inclusive of minorities while most of VET students come from poor economic backgrounds, exposed to little early, quality education opportunities.

Choosing VET as an education alternative is difficult also considering the fact that the decision is immediately related with choosing an orientation and a profession very early in life (when only 15). Difficulties or uncertainties in this respect are related to weak/lack of professional orientation programs or/and services targeting these

categories of young people. Overall, the first source of information among VET student is the subject of "Career orientation while for trainees friends and relatives prevail. The second most relevant source among trainees is reported to be the employment offices, a factor exclusive of VET trainees and not relevant to VET students. On the other hand, the profile choice is mainly led by 'opportunities to earn more' (particularly in construction). Tourism is most attractive, because students perceive the program as interesting. While in ICT and textiles profiles, it is talent/interest that rules among all influencing factors. Interestingly, for trainees the most influencing factor in choosing the profile/course consists in the content of the modules of the course and the opportunity to practice, which is claimed to be more abundant in VEC programs.

Issues of equal opportunities are observed both from the perspective of students and teachers. Beyond the deep gender segregation by sectors and profiles, the system is perceived to provide limited equal chances to enter and progress within the system. Equal opportunities are challenged by a variety of social indicators. Disability and region are perceived as the main basis for inequity in opportunities. Construction has a higher incidence with reference to all indicators. In particular, in Construction, the strongest inhibitors to enter and progress are reported to be disability and economic situation of the family. Religion takes the first place as a base for inequality in chances to progress in construction. In the ICT profile, economic situation and religion prevail, both at the entry point and in progressing when enrolled in the school. Gender becomes of primary importance only when considering Textile and Tourism. In both these profiles, gender is important as a base of inequality to enter and progress. Interestingly, religion persists as the second most important factor in textiles and tourism, too. While previous research has explored on gender, disability and economic situation based inequalities, religion is for the first time identified as a strong determinant to be addressed.

Regarding general access to technology, there is an observed trend of unbalanced technological accessibility between the school and home environment. Across sectors, this technological discrepancy is more pronounced among the students in the Construction sector. However, on the whole, students have become exceedingly connected to technology through making regular use of their smartphones, Internet, social networking sites and communication applications.

With regard to the specific use of technology for learning/teaching purposes, in general, VET providers are institutions with a moderate to low use of ICT and the use of the Internet for learning purposes is scarcely utilized in the classroom environment or respective labs. Most students make use of the Internet for working on their assignments and for communicating electronically with teachers or other fellow students. Variation across sectors shows that students in ICT are more likely to use Internet to study, followed by students in the tourism sector. Moreover, the use of computer software specific to their professional profile remains limited. In classrooms, the majority of teachers report that computers, laptops, and projectors are most likely to be used frequently, as compared to newer technologies such as tablets, smartboards and smartphones that have a relatively low uptake and are yet to be used significantly.

However there is an increasing interest in blended learning among the teachers and instructors of VET; most surveyed teachers are highly optimistic about the positive impact of technology on their jobs and on their students' professional outcomes.

As regards the perceived effectiveness of various teaching methods, teachers appear to regard newer teaching methods more effective than the traditional ones. The majority of teachers perceive teaching in small groups and project work as very effective. Furthermore, the combination of traditional learning in the classroom with digital teaching is expected to be effective. Even so, instructors appear to be more resistant to newer teaching methods than the teachers. They tend to argue that digital media could be more effective if used as supportive teaching material or for illustration purposes and they are more accepting of personalized/customized teaching adapted to trainees' skills. Distant learning in turn, as another ICT enabled teaching method, is perceived as the less effective teaching method by both teachers and instructors.

The findings related to labor market insertion and employability of graduates are very similar between students and trainees. The main difference lies in the intentions to search for a job after graduation. While trainees are more likely to do so, VET students are more likely to plan continuing their education to higher levels of VET or university. This latter group is higher in ICT studies, while those planning to look for a job are the students of the construction sector. The teachers/instructors think that students/trainees that attend studies/ courses at their schools/centers have the adequate knowledge to start working in their profession upon completion, and a high majority of them claim that the graduates are equipped with the relevant knowledge at the VET school/center. In the opinion of teachers and instructors, the level of professional knowledge, the field of specialization and profile, the level of practical skills, and discipline at work have been selected as the most important factors for higher opportunities of labor market insertion. Instructors also stress the importance of common knowledge, communication skills and foreign languages.

VET graduates have expectations of higher employment and self-employment opportunities compared to their counterparts from general education background. The likelihood is higher in the tourism and ICT sectors, while students in the textile sector have the lowest scores. The period of transition from school to work is, in general, expected to be long. Students who expect one year or longer transition periods are those of textile, construction, and ICT

VET students are almost equally divided between the alternatives of working in a public institution/enterprise, a private enterprise, and starting up their own business, whilst most of the trainees expect to be employed in the private sector. As per profile expectations, textile graduates are more likely to start up their own business, students in tourism expect to work in private enterprises and ICT students think they are more likely to work in a public enterprise.

The main sources of information on employment opportunities are the teachers of practice and instructors at vocational centers, friends and relatives and school/ center management. Career offices are not considered an effective source of information. The information provided at school/center level on the employment opportunities of future graduates is perceived as sufficient students and trainees, and as more adequate in the tourism and construction sector;

In the opinion of teachers and instructors, the level of professional knowledge, the field of specialization and profile, the level of practical skills, and discipline at work have been selected are the most important factors for labor market insertion. Instructors tend to give quite higher importance to the factors of common knowledge, communication

skills and foreign languages compared to the importance given to them by teachers.

Both students and trainees have selected having better working tools and equipment as the most important factor for improving their employability. Other factors include more practice hours, longer internships in the business environment, more qualified teachers and better teaching methods. The trainees have also recommended a better collaboration of vocational centers with employment and career offices, while students of ICT and textile have also listed the use of computers and technology. Teachers and instructors have confirmed these recommendations and in addition think that the organization of more activities in collaboration with the businesses, the improvement of the school infrastructure and raw materials and more practice hours at the business sites will improve employability. They also recommend programs more oriented towards special professions. An interesting recommendation is to add subjects/ knowledge about entrepreneurship, start-ups and SME management.

In order to match the school curricula with the labor market needs, teachers have listed the organization of joint activities with businesses as the most effective approach. The adaptation of curricula to match the regional labor market needs and the discussion of curricula with local businesses have also been selected as the most effective approaches. The instructors have also considered effective the possibility to adapt course programs of successful courses in- and outside of the country. Teachers and instructors consider the approach of decisions about curricula made by school/center boards as ineffective.

With regard to infrastructure, the improvement of workstation conditions and of the lab conditions are considered the most urgent interventions. Continuous trainings of teachers is also selected among the most important ones. School autonomy, lab conditions, tools and equipment used in practice, number of students in each class, teachers' work conditions, possibilities of teachers for continuous training, the compatibility of modules with current technology, and matching programs with labor market needs have resulted in the highest need for improvement. Less improvement is required for the school buildings, class conditions and the personalization of teaching methods in accordance with students' needs. The compatibility of modules with current technological developments is also listed among the highly important interventions, especially for the MFCs.

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Annexes

Annex I: ICT and Mobile Media/Devices in VET

In general, VET providers are institutions with a moderate to low use of ICT for management and teaching and learning purposes. In the literature review, there are no cases identified of schools/centers using mobile devices or social media for learning purposes.

ICT Infrastructure

ICT conditions of VET providers vary. Especially in the vocational schools where ICT professional direction is offered, there are new IT labs (2-3 years) with server, central control etc. At least for 5 vocational schools (Shkoder, Tirana, Kamza, Elbasan) were provided in 2012 a total of 10 ICT labs, 10 classrooms equipped with interactive whiteboards, applications for interactive learning materials, class management system for e-learning, computer networking and infrastructure (Zero Client Technology, UPS/Power supply, laptops, USB networking, printing and copying services). Teacher training was offered as well (CP, 2015). Many providers have overhead projectors and use it for teaching/learning purposes. All providers should have Internet connection, but this is not always the case. (GIZ/ETF, 2014) In each of the 11 schools where economy professional direction is offered, as part of ALBIZ program (2009-2013), a lab was installed (computers and office equipment) and is used for training firm module – a simulation of economic activity (Albiz evaluation doc, 2014).

Digitalized Information, Course Material and Learning

At national level, MoSWY manages the VET Portal (www.vet.al) providing information for the VET offer, teaching materials produced by NAVETQ (providing curricula information and teaching materials at: http://www.akafp.gov.al), but also uploading a limited number of e-books produced mainly as project initiatives (GIZ mainly through the North East VET project in 2010) and multimedia especially for electro-technics. This portal is used for enrollment reporting issues as well. Each school is a user and has to regularly report students' number, dropout, failing level, average mark for each profile and year of study, based on gender.

At provider level, GIZ/ETF (2014) baseline of public providers, management records –and especially digitalized ones– were investigated in the frame of the institutional assessment. Qualitative data gathered from the interviews indicated that the use of electronic data keeping and processing is still very low. Paper records are kept mainly for the data required by administrative instructions and law, such as students' admissions, attendances and progress of students and personal files for each staff member. Smaller schools with a former local status (were totally dependent on the Ministry and did not enjoy any type of autonomy), have limited data record-keeping. Additionally, Management Information Systems (MIS) that would enable better planning, everyday

management and measurement of the provider's performance, such as graduates' employability rate, through tracer studies, are lacking in almost all public VET providers visited. Managerial accounting indicators, such as cost per student/trainee/graduate according to each qualification offered, are missing completely.

Nevertheless, there are good initiatives of providers proactively digitalizing the information for management purposes. "Industrial" School (Vlora) management has started to create its own management information system by designing several electronic databases on students, grades, staff matriculation, etc. The school staff was programming the databases. The same applies for Fan S. Noli ICT School in Korça and Herman Gmeiner ICT School in Tirana.

Teachers and ICT

NAVETQ analysis (June 2015) revealed that both teachers and instructors have deficiencies in using digital media in teaching. Based on latest survey from ETF, only 51% of interviewed VET teachers participated in ICT training for teaching and only 76% of them believe this training had a moderate or positive effect. The same survey revealed that 77% of teachers claim to need this type of training (Konini, 2015). VET providers do not have funds for teacher training and this limits the possibility for continuous development. International actors have contributed in this direction. Particularly in ICT for teaching, GIZ is currently supporting ICT teachers in Kamza School by enabling Cisco Academy for them. Albiz Project had an important capacity building component in introducing training firms as a module but the evaluation report shows that in general, the IT competence of the assigned teachers appears to be very limited and insufficient in order to operate the equipment to its intended use and capacity. In general, the teachers assigned to the training firms' (TF) rooms are lacking the necessary level of IT and network expertise to operate the system.

Glimpses of Blended Learning in VET

Training firms' modules introduced in the economy and business professional directions might be considered as one good example of using technology, distance learning and networking in learning. Students are taking this module in classes arranged like offices and using simulators for business decisions and market dynamics. Each training firm created in schools could participate in national and international fairs of training firms[40]. The teachers use the Internet-platform www.al-biz.al to communicate and to exchange materials. Further training to improve the use of the platform was directly made available at 10 schools, so that teachers themselves could create courses and learn to share teaching contents and communicate amongst them. Technical problems limit the effectiveness of this approach. Project evaluation document says that the Internet connection in all TF offices is very slow and limits the effective work and use of the equipment. Teachers admit to use their own PC workplace at home if they have to download teaching materials or have to interact with other TFs. There were registered difficulties in the utilization of the national and international TF network and/or the installed platforms; servers, PCs and network configurations seem to be vulnerable to manipulation and misuse since no password-protected user groups were programmed; the schools are lacking a credible system of hardware and

40 http://www.alct-edu.com/index.php?l=e

software protection, usage logbook, simple maintenance and troubleshooting routine as well as one or two dedicated IT teachers as school-based system administrators. Furthermore, the IT equipment at schools often lacks the regular maintenance, which might impede their full utilization for the intended purpose. Beqir Çela School has lately been involved in the iClubs Albania initiative . VODAFONE Foundation Albania and the British Council supported the initiative supporting innovation and technology use at schools. A selected group of ICT students and teachers develop ICT projects are part of an online network and competition.

Annex II: International Actors in VET and Employment in Albania

Vocational Education and Training system in Albania has been underfunded for many years (VET budget is around 14 million Euros), with no financial autonomy at the VET providers' level that would enable income-generating activities and a minimal collaboration and networking capacities with employers and other providers that would allow a resource sharing and more efficient use of inputs. In this setting, international donors played a crucial role in policy development, technical assistance, support for employment services, labor market insertion, social partners' dialog facilitation and VET provision via investment in infrastructure, equipment, tools, teacher training, learning materials, etc.

Albania has signed the Paris Declaration on Donors' Coordinators and has made a progress in ownership, management for results, and mutual accountability (2008 results). Department of Strategies and Donors Coordination at the Prime Minister's Office is responsible for coordinating donors toward Albanian priorities and at the same time ensures the alignment of donors' support with the national strategies.

Donors in VET sector particularly are coordinated voluntarily in DACH+ group with the participation of projects funded by German-speaking governments/agencies and EU. Regular meetings have for years helped international and national actors to avoid overlapping and coordinate their interventions in VET and employment system. In the frame of IPA 2 (2015) budget support, the Integrated Policy Management Group is created as a new approach to guide and monitor policy development, strategy implementation and evaluation and strengthen sector and donors' coordination. It is headed by Ministry of Social Welfare and Youth and has the membership of most important donors (in terms of funds: EC, SDC, GIZ, ADA, ILO, etc.), and other ministries. Formerly, this function was covered by the (VET) Sector Working Group, headed by SDC. In particular, SDC coordinates the Swiss Government-funded projects through regular meetings to enforce mutual collaboration, create synergy, and avoid overlapping.

European Union remains the most important donor in the sector through the series of IPA projects, CADRS, ETF technical support, and Erasmus+ Program. The latest IPA 2 (2015) will be a Sector Budget Support and will financially contribute to the implementation of the National Strategy on Employment and Skills 2014-2020. It represents a considerable fund (30 million Euros) to be distributed in three years, which would increase with almost 80% the yearly VET budget (depending on the MoSWY ability to plan and disburse following National Strategy on Employment and Skills action plan).

SDC is another important donor in VET. Currently four complementary projects are being run and the fourth is in its inception phase. Risi Albania Project, implemented by Helvetas and other local partners, is focused on three economic sectors (tourism, ICT, agro-processing) facilitating and boosting the demand and creating new jobs for young men and women. Implemented by UNDP, Skills for Employment (TEP 2) is assisting MoSWY and downstream institutions by improving existing processes and providing new solutions that would bring the change at system and policy level. The Entrepreneurship Program, implemented

by SECO aims to provide entrepreneurs with the needed skills and support them in launching and growing companies in order to create jobs. Coaching for employment, implemented by Swisscontact, aims the labor market insertion and integration of vulnerable individuals from marginalized groups. The new project, Skills for Jobs, to be implemented by Swisscontact, will facilitate an innovative approach in VET provision using technology and networking as mechanisms to create sustainable VET providers and increase the learners' employability.

Activity of the main donors in VET sector is summarized in the table below. Other donor-funded projects have capacity development as a mechanisms to increase entrepreneurship and employment, mainly through non-formal skills development, not always in partnership with VET providers (e.g. SME supporting projects under coordination of the Ministry of Economic Development, Entrepreneurship, Trade and Tourism, agriculture development programs coordinated by Ministry of Agriculture, Rural Development and Water Administration). Some of these projects are listed in the table below. For a more complete list, refer to "Compendium of the National Vocational Skills Development, - VSD Puzzle", prepared for SDC by Delina Nano, May 2015. There other smaller scale projects and interventions in VET providers level by local NGOs and INGOs (e.g. DORCAS support in Korça region).

Donor/ agency	Project	Description	Level	Sector	Region	Provider	S4J component			
								VET	LMI	BR
IPA 2015	Social Sector Budget Support (EUR 30 M for 3 years; supposed to start in 2016)	Financial support to the MoSWY to achieve these objectives: -to increase labor market participation and provide job opportunities for all (women, youth, marginalized groups) -to improve quality and increase coverage of VET (Competences of VET teachers and teacher trainers; extend VET offer to the rural areas and to the most marginalized groups; better match of VET offers and employment opportunities; develop and implement Albanian Qualifications Framework AQF) -to improve the quality and effectiveness of labor market institutions and services, and of the bodies responsible for the implementation of NESS 2014-2020	Policy Formal VET Provision	NA	NA	NA		*	*	
IPA 2013	Support to Employment - oriented Vocational Education and Training (EUR 3.45 M; supposed to start in 2015)	The project will improve the internal efficiency of the VET system through improved soft infrastructure (efficient and effective management of labor market institutions and VET providers) as well as better qualified staff. The project will introduce Multifunctional VET centers, as bigger and efficient providers offering new short term and practical courses, highly responsive to labor market needs.	formal VET provision	CN; EN; TR	Shkodra	A. Broci (+K. Margjini, VTC Shkodra)		*		*
				ALL	Elbasan	A. Myftiu (+ S. Ceka, Elbasan VTC)				
				TR; EN; ICT; chem. Ind	Fier	VTC Fier (+P.Sota)				

Donor/ agency	Project	Description	Level	Sector	Region	Provider	S4J component			
								VET	LMI	BR
IPA 2011	Supporting Social Inclusion of Roma and Egyptian Communities (EUR 1.695 M. Lately finished)	The project supports the social inclusion of Roma and Egyptian communities in Berati, Korça and Vlora, by offering among other intervention some skill development.	Local; non-formal VET provision; LMI	AG; TO; ICT; TX	Berati, Korça, Vlora	On-job		*	*	
ETF	Continuous Professional Development of VET teachers and trainers (regional SEET)	Project aim is to support CPD for teachers and trainers in VET in the SEET region by: improving quality and demand-orientation; improving stakeholder co-operation and capabilities; supporting policy development and implementation; developing and implementing practical and innovative tools. A regional survey is conducted and a CDP will be piloted in 1 or 2 providers	formal VET provision	All	Elbasan Tirane Durres?	A. Myftiu MFC Kamez Beqir Cela?	*	*	*	
	Support to the development and implementation of the Albanian Qualifications Framework	The AQF law and the AQF handbook will be designed with ETF facilitation, giving answer to important questions such as curricula development, occupational reform, sectoral committees etc.	Policy					*		*

Donor/ agency	Project	Description	Level	Sector	Region	Provider	S4J component			
								VET	LMI	BR
EU/ Erasmus+	Apprenticeship Schemes for Youth Employability in Albania (EUR 250000; 2015- 2017)	Aims of to identify a sustainable way of implementing apprenticeship as a systematic and rigorous work-place based learning scheme in VET. The project is being implemented in collaboration between NAVETQ and the Hamburger Institute fur BeruflicheBildung (HIBB), in tourism sector with the support of Albanian Association of Tourism.	Policy Formal VET provision	TR	Tirana	Tourism & Hospitality; MFC Kamza		*		*
SDC/ Helvetas	RISI Albania (CHF 4.5M; 2013-2016)	Project aims increasing youth employment by (i) increasing demand (for jobs); (ii) job intermediation; and (iii) improve supply (labor force skills). In ICT sector, the project facilitated	Demand driven	TO; ICT; AP			*			*
		Tourism sector: (increasing demand (for jobs) -facilitates new product development (natural tourism) -organised trainings for touristic guides -support a sound tourism legal framework (forthcoming)	(non) formal VT	TO				*		*
		Agro processing (increasing demand (for jobs) --8 service providers were trained on diagnostic (design tailor made tools not donors driven) - supported certification package for businesses (partnership with Albinspect) -collaboration with banks to design a crediting system adjusted for agriculture businesses using creative business solutions, in collaboration with Albanian Association of Marketing	(non) formal VT	AP						

Donor/ agency	Project	Description	Level	Sector	Region	Provider	S4J component			
								VET	LMI	BR
		ICT sector (increasing demand (for jobs) In software development, the project facilitated/ promoted -using ALMOOC on-line learning platform for ICT students (best students are employed by the founder) -using Microsoft IT academy for ICT students (waiting for MoSWY to buy 1 license) In Business Processes, created Albanian Outsourcing Association – mainly with call centers as employment generators, especially for young people.	ICT platforms	ICT			*			*
		In Job Intermediation component: -collaboration with employment agencies as www.duapune.com -Labor market information on mainstream media: Three national mainstream media organizations with Risi's continuous support are actively disseminating Labor Market Information to young job seekers and their parents, thereby improving their education, job and career chances	Network & marketing						*	*
		In skills Development component: propose "sector skills committees" structure to update curricula, beginning with the Tourism sector. These structures are included in the draft VET law; supposed to work with NAVETQ						*		*

Donor/ agency	Project	Description	Level	Sector	Region	Provider	S4J component			
								VET	LMI	BR
SDC/ UNDP	Skills for Employment (CHF 3.171M; 2014-2018)	The project goal: "more young women and men in urban and rural areas in Albania are employed or self-employed".The selected interventions will feed in changes at system & policy level, by improving existing process or design new ones. Its components & development status (28/10/2015) are: 1.VET system Governance -Employment programs are reviewed and new ones are suggested; - a new system of EP design and implementation is being drafted (to avoid just employment formalization and improve application process/ calls/procedures); -a study is being run on how to spread NES in rural area -roadmap for VE school transfer to MoSWY was prepared. Recommendations were given on the VET system governance and VET offer 2.Work based learning -a study on the status of Albanian WBL has been commissioned; -a platform for VT offer is being designed to offer ONLINE information for both public and private providers 3.Quality assurance (not yet started but a AQ system will be developed and piloted) 4.Skills forecasting -instruments for short and medium term information on the LM needs are being designed; -national lists of occupations is being reviewed with the assistance of private sector (Business Albania)	Policy				*	*	*	*

Donor/ agency	Project	Description	Level	Sector	Region	Provider	S4J component			
								VET	LMI	BR
SDC/ Swisscon-tact	Coaching for Employment	Implemented in partnership with NES and MoSWY and aims the labor market insertion and integration of vulnerable individuals from marginalized groups, through employment or self-employment.	LMI						*	*
	AlbVET	Considered as one of the most successful VET project in Albania, some solutions and mechanisms could be replicated. The project: (i) renovated the thermo-hydraulic profile in all vocational schools based on the project-based learning approach; (ii) piloted a post-secondary course for IT Practitioners; (iii) Trained IT teacher's from 17 VET schools; (iv) stimulated private sector participation in VET through WBL; (v) developed bakery and hairdressing training as partnership for learning between private training centers and businesses. (vi) advocated VET as an issue of public interest in Albania & contributed to policy reform in VET	formal VET	ICT; CN; etc				*	*	*
SDC/ SECO	SECO Entrepreneurship Program (2015-2019)	The Entrepreneurship Program aims to provide entrepreneurs with the needed skills and support them in launching and growing companies in order to create jobs through improving entrepreneurial education, supporting business startups, facilitating access to finance and fostering the different actors that are involved in entrepreneurship	non-formal VET provision; LMI	NA					*	*

Donor/ agency	Project	Description	Level	Sector	Region	Provider	S4J component			
								VET	LMI	BR
GIZ	Vocational education and training (VET) programme, Albania (EUR 8.02M; 2010-2016)	Support Multifunctional VET center in Kamza to become a leading VET provider, responsive to labor market needs, providing education and short term courses. It supports ICT, Tourism and Health Services sector. ICT curricula was revised and online training is provided for teachers (Cisco academy) and students (ALMOOC). Mentors at businesses are trained for WBL (in Health service).	Provision	TO; ICT; Health Services;	Tirana	MFC Kamza	*	*	*	*
		Design together with NAVETQ a Human Resources Development Strategy and support CPD for administrative and teaching staff in selected sectors. A network of trained trainers will be developed as the policies and tools for systemic approach (by NAVETQ)	Policy; Provision	CN; TO; TX; AP	TBD	TBD		*		*
		Introducing a Tracing system to increase effectivity of Labor Market Information System. A tracing mechanism has been developed and piloted for 3 years at Kamza MFC. In this phase is being extended in Tirana region providers, as an intermediate step to national level.	Policy; Provision	All	Tirana	All		*	*	
		Revision of VET legal framework; Reform of the VET sector – ongoing process. GIZ is a strategic partner	Policy	NA						

Donor/ agency	Project	Description	Level	Sector	Region	Provider	S4J component			
								VET	LMI	BR
GIZ	Increasing the competitiveness of MSMEs by promoting innovation and entrepreneurship (ProSME)	The main objective is to Increasing competitiveness of MSME on key sectors by the promotion of innovation and entrepreneurship. The project is in line with the Albanian Business and Investment Development Strategy 2014-2020 and its pillar 2 on Smart Growth. Project goal: 100 founders of new businesses (of these at least 50% women) have participated in measures of entrepreneurship development (action-oriented entrepreneurship trainings, technical support, support in financing, establishment of networks).	Non formal training	NA	Tirana, Korça, Shkodra (TBD)			*		*
ADA	Strengthening dual training in the Albanian garment industry	Support curricula development and dual learning in garment industry, though business partnership support. NABER is a private company successfully collaborating with the VET provider in textile.	VE Provision	TX	Durres	HysenCela		*	*	*
	Support of vocational education in the field of welding	Support training in welding in different VTCs though business partnership support. WiFi company, licensed for welding courses, is collaborating with public VTC to deliver short term courses	VT Provision	CN; EN; TR	Tirana, Elbasan, Durres	VTC of Tirana 4, Elbasan, Durres		*	*	*

Donor/ agency	Project	Description	Level	Sector	Region	Provider	S4J component			
								VET	LMI	BR
ADA	SEED - Education & employment for youth and women (2014 –2016)	Design mechanisms for improved cooperation and participation of all stakeholders active in women and youth empowerment. Public VET system will be involved in providing the training to the project beneficiaries. The mediation for the employment of women and youth will be fostered by actions that aim their sustainable employability in cooperation and network with local governance, public institutions, other NGOs, private sector and relevant clusters.	Policy Provision	NA	Shkodra; Puka; Lezha	NA			*	*
ADA/ Kultur-Kontakt	Support Herman Gmeiner ICT school	Herman Gmeiner ICT school was established and is continuously being supported in infrastructure, teacher training, curricula development etc.		ICT	Tirana	H. Gmeiner		*	*	*
	Entrepreneurship Learning	Through this project, the tourism and hospitality schools can collaborate with student dormitories to perform practical learning modules and enhance their entrepreneurship skills (TBC)	Provision	TO	Shkoder	H. Bushati		*	*	
	Sustainable Education Management in Albania	Support management information system though business partnership with BIT Albania by introducing SOKRATES Web (School administration system) and ITS (eTesting), e-Learning Contents (eContents), SITOS (Learning management system). Is supporting the virtual class. It was launched in 60 gymnasiums and the first feedback is received. The project will be expanded.	General education				*			*

Donor/ agency	Project	Description	Level	Sector	Region	Provider	S4J component			
								VET	LMI	BR
ADA/ Kultur-Kontakt	ALBIZ (2009-2013)	The project assisted economy & business schools in: -school quality development and quality assurance (Plan-Do-Check-Act approach every year and decide on development goals for the coming academic year) -school management aligned with regional needs -adjust the curricula (based on labor market needs) -teacher training on modern teaching methods -Introducing training firms – classes arranged like offices and using simulators for business decisions and market dynamics. The Internet-platform www.al-biz.al is used by the teachers to communicate and to exchange materials. -school networking intensification by introducing PASO (teacher responsible for business relation) -gender mainstreaming In its final phase, the project was extended to some VET school in tourism and agribusiness	Provision	Econo-my; TO; AG		13 providers in Economy (+TO, AG)	*	*		*

Donor/ agency	Project	Description	Level	Sector	Region	Provider	S4J component			
								VET	LMI	BR
Italian – Albanian Development Cooperation (Bilateral Protocol 2014 - 2016)	Vocational Education and Training through Innovation (EUR 5 M Soft loan; 2015-2016)	A center of excellence in agriculture & agro processing will be created to offer vocational qualifications aligned with the labor market. Interventions will include school and dormitory building reconstruction, building labs and workshops with the necessary equipment. (The contract was signed in December 2015 and no further details are available)	Provision	AG; AP	Fier, Lushnje	R. Kryeziu Mechanical Agriculture		*		
	IADSA - Italian-Albanian Debt for Development, Swap Programme (EUR 20M; 2014-2020)	Fashion-VET AL- coordinated by MoSWY, aims to develop a labor market oriented VET provision in high value added operations shoe & leather manufacturing to meet European standards. It promotes lifelong learning and aims vulnerable groups' employment and self-employment.	Provision (2 years)	TX	Tirana	Technical-economic school		*		
		MECAVET- Mechanical Vocational Education and Training for Youth, coordinated by MoSWY, the project goal is to increase mechatronic students' employability by introducing new ways of collaboration between private sector and a well-managed VET provider. The school can host training for companies.	Formal and non-formal provision		Shkoder	A.Broci		*	*	*
		DEV-OPS - coordinated by Ministry of Economy, the projected aims to train for a 4 months course, up to 70 new professionals in the sector of Tourism, particularly in local touristic guide; marketing and promotion of typical local products; hotel reception and tourism accommodation, and English language.	(non) formal training	TO	Skrapar, Berat			*		

Donor/ agency	Project	Description	Level	Sector	Region	Provider	S4J component			
								VET	LMI	BR
Italian – Albanian Develo-pment Coope-ration (Bilateral Protocol 2014 - 2016)	IADSA - Italian-Albanian Debt for Development, Swap Programme (EUR 20M; 2014-2020)	RISE-OP - Rural Inclusive Social & Economic Opportunities. The goal of the project is to specially combat against emigration, create economy, job opportunities and new entrepreneurship for unemployed: rural women and youth through vocational training in tourism services and, in arts and crafts skills.	(non) formal training	TO	Permet			*		
ILO	Regular Budget Supported Action	Offers technical assistance to the Ministry of Social Welfare and Youth for supporting the implementation of the National Employment and Skills Strategy 2014-2020, and its relationship with the preparatory work needed for the next IPA II funding cycle in this sector.	Policy							
	IPA 2010 Project on HRD in Albania (EUR 3M; 2012-2015)	The project aimed the improvement of labor market institutions and increasing employability of the Albanian labor force. Components: Modernisation of the State Labor Inspectorate; Modernisation of the National Employment Service; Vocational Education and Training (VET) Reform. Designing of NESS 2014-2020 was facilitated by this project. Tools developed and piloted are worth reviewing when designing interventions in regional networks, VET quality assurance, RPL, using ICT in employment promotion and SNA etc.	Policy				*	*	*	*

Donor/ agency	Project	Description	Level	Sector	Region	Provider	S4J component			
								VET	LMI	BR
Albanian-American Develo-pment Foundation	Junior achievement (2012-ongoing)	Aims to foster to secondary school students the work-readiness, entrepreneurship and financial literacy skills, and uses experiential learning to inspire students to reach their potential. It is extended in a wide network of general and vocational secondary schools.	Non-formal training		All regions	Tregtare, Pavaresia K.Gjoka		*	*	
	PROTIK	Protik is an ICT resource center and aims to become the Albanian ICT hub: a connection point for those seeking the latest and most innovative ideas, products, and services. Protik goals: Foster innovation and entrepreneurship; Help increase demand for ICT; Promote networking and partnership. Its partners are: USAID, AADF; CISCO; MICROSOFT; ALBTELECOM. It has an internship lab, a young innovators club and other projects to promote innovation through ICT. Quite open to collaborate and an extensive network.	Non-formal training					*		*
	Agriculture school of excellence (forthcoming)	The school is being/will be involved in a twining project with an agriculture school in Thessaloniki. For the time being, the project is pending.	Formal education	AG	Korca	I. Terova		*		

Donor/ agency	Project	Description	Level	Sector	Region	Provider	S4J component			
								VET	LMI	BR
British council	Education through Innovation and Technology (2015-2017)	The Innovation Club (I-CLUBS) project aims at supporting both general high schools and vocational ICT schools, to use technology for improving teaching quality and enhance the creative innovative abilities of students.	Provision (learning through projects)	ICT	Durres	B. Cela	*	*		
	Skills for professional development (2012-2015)	Provided free online resources and also worked on providing teaching products for teachers of linguistics in the field of ICT and tourism. 'English for Skills' focused on preparing and matching the English language curriculum of ICT schools with the requirements of the market economy. (plans to be continued)	Provision (English teacher training)	ICT; TO	NA		*	*		

nb: in grey are listed the projects lately closed but with an impact in VET system and piloted effective solution

Sectors abbreviations: AG – Agriculture; AP – Agro processing; TO – Tourism & Hospitality; TX – Textile; TR – Transport; CN – Construction; ICT – Information and Communication Technology