



**Review of the International Standard Classification of
Education 1997
(ISCED 97)**

**Recommendations from the ISCED Technical Advisory Panel
for the review of TVET as part of the orientation dimension**

UIS regional meetings 2009/2010

Draft Version October 2009

[Doc: RM_TVET in ISCED]

INTRODUCTION

At the UNESCO General Conference in October 2007, national authorities expressed a need for the re-appraisal of the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED) in light of important education systems reforms that have taken place worldwide since the 1997 revision.

In 2009, the UIS established an ISCED Technical Advisory Panel (TAP) to make recommendations for the review of the ISCED to be presented for adoption at the UNESCO General Conference in 2011. The first TAP meeting on January 2009 identified the need to review the definition of TVET as one of the main areas of work for the ISCED review. There was a general agreement that the definition of TVET in the 1997 ISCED should be reviewed. Although the importance of increasing the coverage of TVET programmes in the current education statistics was noted as well, the current review of TVET in ISCED focuses largely on steps to improve the use of the orientation dimension for the classification of programmes in an educational system, where the aim is to identify general from vocational programmes in the ISCED levels 2, 3 and 4.

The UIS commissioned a paper on TVET¹ and presented its results In July of 2009 during the second TAP meeting. The work presented useful results for the TVET community in proposing ways in which TVET could be better defined and better data collected. Further work required linking these findings for the purposes of the international data collection at the core of which is ISCED. The recommendations TAP members proposed by the TAP members were further developed by UIS after the meeting and are presented next. As these are still under discussion with the TAP members, the UIS has noted down its remarks. The ISCED regional expert meetings are invited to review and comment on these recommendations in light of national and regional perspectives as well. Their feedback will be integrated into the discussions of the third and fourth meetings of the ISCED TAP in December, 2009 and April 2010.

The Australian Pilot Study on the definition of VET shows no major disagreements on the definition in ISCED. However, if better data collection is to be reached, there needs to be efforts at the level of data collection so that all VET providers can be reached and thus their data included in international statistics (annex 1).

RECOMMENDATIONS IN THE REVIEW OF TVET AS PART OF THE ORIENTATION DIMENSION (CURRENTLY IN FURTHER REVIEW OF THE ISCED TECHNICAL ADVISORY PANEL)

¹ The TVET paper was prepared by Dr. Chris Chinien. Nhung Truong from UIS worked on a preliminary version of this draft.

The TAP members recognize that:

- There is an increased worldwide interest on TVET; it is very important politically, socially and economically, thus it deserves a deeper attention and focused progress.
- There is a need to review the definition so that coverage can be improved.
- When defining TVET, in addition to education and training, the notion of skills has to be considered.
- There is a need to improve TVET coverage in data collection; Ministries of Education as well as all other providers (e.g. Ministries of Labour, training agencies, etc.) should be involved in these efforts.

Based on the above, the TAP members recommend the following:

1. The orientation dimension definition should be revised in the ISCED to include only two categories: general and vocational. The pre-vocational category will be included with the general category (see definitions in Annex 2).
2. Consequently, the definition of the general category should be reviewed as well.
3. The TVET dimension should be taken into account in ISCED level 1, 2, 3 as well as at the post-secondary level (ISCED 4 level and beyond). There are some programmes recorded as 1C in some ISCED mappings. While this is incorrect in ISCED 1 (there are no destination categories for ISCED 1) and the mappings are corrected, this suggests, however, that there is a vocational focus on certain programmes at this level that could refer to Adult Literacy programmes, which may have a labour market destination by design. At level 1, programmes of study, in both formal and non-formal, have vocational orientations. This can be seen in the skills and knowledge and attitudes, albeit rudimentary, that are imparted to learners about aspects of workplaces in rural and urban areas. Contents of adult literacy programmes tend to be strongly based on skills and knowledge that are desired in the daily working lives of learners.

UIS notes that as per the current definition of vocational/technical education, for a programme to be considered as vocational, the skills taught should be job/occupation specific. Furthermore, if the international community is interested in detailed information of TVET programmes specifically, this could be the subject of a TVET specific data collection with goals of its own so that the desired detail can be obtained. The UIS notes as well that in previous years, the education questionnaires included a table on fields of education for technical and vocational education for ISCED levels 2, 3 and 4. Data was scarce for the 8 broad fields² and almost inexistent for the 25 detailed fields³.

² Education, Humanities and Arts, Social Sciences, Business and Law, Science, Engineering- Manufacturing- Construction, Agriculture, Health and Welfare, Services

³ See ISCED 97 for a detailed break of these categories.

4. The ISCED 3 review should consider including the fields of education and training for programme classification.

It should be noted that this is included as part of the ISCED 3 proposal currently under discussion in the ISCED regional meetings.

5. Because a major part of TVET takes place in the non-formal education sector, it is important to agree on the criteria for classification for NFE. In fact, ISCED is a framework for both, formal and non-formal education.

UIS notes that work on the classification of non-formal education programmes is part of the review of ISCED. A first step is to agree on an international definition of non-formal education which is part of the regional discussions.

6. It is necessary to link the ISCED review work with the wider UNESCO TVET strategy and the following UNESCO definition: *“TVET is a comprehensive term referring to those aspects of the educational process involving, in addition to general education, the study of technologies and related sciences, and the acquisition of practical skills, attitudes, understanding and knowledge relating to occupants in various sectors of economic and social life.”*

UIS notes that the current definition of vocational/technical education, within the orientation dimension in ISCED levels 2, 3, 4, includes the notion of skills. Any changes to the current definition on TVET, as part of the orientation dimension of educational programmes in ISCED, must consider how it can be operationalized in the current education statistics questionnaires. A more specific data collection on TVET may include aspects that can shed light on the above definition.

7. The International Standard Classification of Occupations (ISCO) may be used only when helpful for classifying an educational programme. No strict links exist between ISCED (educational programmes) and ISCO (occupations).

8. The work on the review of post-secondary education (ISCED 5) needs to consider the inclusion of vocational education. Currently, the distinction between 5A and 5B programmes is based on the notion of academically-oriented versus occupationally oriented. .

ANNEX 1: QUICK SURVEY ON THE DEFINITION OF TVET

Australia has spearheaded a pilot project for improving the definition of TVET across OECD countries. A survey questionnaire was used to obtain member states' feedback regarding various components that need to be included in the renewed definition of TVET. Responses were received from 29 OECD INES network members.

Following are highlights of the key findings:

- The majority of countries agreed that a tight relationship exists between TVET and specific classes of occupations and trades;
- Countries were almost evenly split regarding the necessity for specifying a practical training component in the definition of TVET;
- Countries were almost evenly split regarding whether or not they differentiate between pre-vocational and vocational programmes;
- Almost two thirds of all countries responded that assessment in VET programmes differs from that in general programmes.
- The great majority of countries indicated that TVET lead to industry relevant competencies; relates to specific fields of study and leads to unique qualifications.
- In the majority of OECD countries, VET programmes are classified based on the final qualification obtained.
- The great majority of the countries indicated that model used for assessing achievement is different between TVET and general education. However, a substantial number of these countries still believed that the ISCED definition of TVET was ambiguous.

The general conclusion reached was that conceptually there was considerable support for the ISCED definition of TVET as part of the orientation dimension in ISCED. The considerable support for the current ISCED definition implies that the main barriers to reporting TVET are not at the 'conceptual' or 'definitional' level. Nevertheless, within the current ISCED definition of VET, a number of countries identified ambiguity in the wording and expressed concern with specific phrases, and sought further clarification on the intended meaning of several terms. Of the countries that do not agree with the ISCED definition, this is often due to implementation issues within their education systems.

ANNEX 2: ISCED 97 DEFINITIONS FOR REVIEW

In light of the above recommendations, the following ISCED 1997 definitions relating to the classification of TVET should be reviewed:

General education

Education which is mainly designed to lead participants to a deeper understanding of a subject or group of subjects, especially, but not necessarily, with a view to preparing participants for further (additional) education at the same or a higher level. Successful completion of these programmes may or may not provide the participants with a labour-market relevant qualification at this level. These programmes are typically school-based. Programmes with a general orientation and not focusing on a particular specialization should be classified in this category.

Pre-vocational or pre-technical education

Education which is mainly designed to introduce participants to the world of work and to prepare them for entry into vocational or technical education programmes. Successful completion of such programmes does not yet lead to a labour-market relevant vocational or technical qualification. For a programme to be considered as pre-vocational or pre-technical education, at least 25 per cent of its content has to be vocational or technical. This minimum is necessary to ensure that the vocational subject or the technical subject is not only one among many others.

Vocational or technical education

Education which is mainly designed to lead participants to acquire the practical skills, know-how and understanding necessary for employment in a particular occupation or trade or class of occupations or trades. Successful completion of such programmes lead to a labour-market relevant vocational qualification recognized by the competent authorities in the country in which it is obtained (e.g. Ministry of Education, employers' associations, etc.).

Programmes in this category may be subdivided into two types:

- those which are primarily theoretically-oriented; and
- those which are primarily practically-oriented.

GROUP WORK ACTIVITY

Please refer to each above recommendation and mark down if your group agrees or disagrees. IN case of disagreement, it is important to summarize the main arguments so that this can be documented and brought together with results from other regional meetings. Results from all regional meetings will be discussed by the ISCED TAP global panel prior to their elaboration of the final recommendations for the new ISCED.

Recommendation	Agree/disagree	Why disagree?	Comments
1.			
2.			
3.			
4.			
5.			
6.			
7.			
8.			