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Developing standards of vocational teacher at bachelor level in Lao PDR

Abstract

On 11th February 2013 the Ministry of Education and Sports (MoES) declared by decree (cp. MoES 2013) the standards developed by the Faculty of Engineering as binding for the education of vocational teachers at bachelor level in Lao PDR. Which development preceded the enacting of this important decree?

All stakeholders involved in vocational education agree that the quality of vocational training in Lao PDR matches neither the requirements of the Lao labour market, nor the requirements of a future ASEAN market. At the same time, there is agreement about the fact that the quality of the training depends most crucially on the teachers' competency. As a direct consequence the Ministry of Education and Sports appointed the Faculty of Engineering, more specifically the relevant Vocational Teacher Education Department (VTED), to develop standards for vocational teachers. The Faculty in turn, submitted to the Regional Cooperation Platform (RCP) the proposal to develop these standards embedded in a scientific study and in close cooperation with teacher education institutions in Indonesia (Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia), Thailand (Rajamangala University of Technology Thanyaburi), and Vietnam (Ministry of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs).

The study describes the development process of the standards based on the current situation of the Lao education sector. To emphasize the practical relevance of the study, it also discusses the prerequisites for successful implementation of the drafted standards and makes a proposal for an implementation strategy.

The standards now serve as a basis for the development of vocational teacher curricula. They expressly highlight the specific particularities of vocational teachers and consider the cultural, ethical and political characteristics of Lao PDR. In this sense the standards are a valuable contribution to the improvement of the country's vocational education system and may well stimulate debate on this in other Southeast Asian countries.

1 Background

Although its economy has grown remarkably in recent years, Lao PDR is still one of the least developed countries in the world. As a consequence, the Lao government has set the goal to shake off this status by 2020. Human resource development is the second of four main

strategic development plans agreed at the IX Communist Party Congress (see Lao People's Revolutionary Party 2011, 42). There is a persisting lack of skilled workers in Lao. Thus one of the most vital challenges here lies in the development of the vocational education sector, which currently simply does not meet the standards and requirements of Laos' growing economy.

An important precondition for increasing the number of qualified workers is the availability of well-trained teachers. Previous studies have shown, however, that teachers at vocational schools are insufficiently qualified at the moment (see Soysouvanh et al. 2011, 13-27). It is imperative to improve vocational teachers' training and qualification to attain the goal of providing the labour market with sufficient skilled workers to feed the growing economy. One important approach for improving the quality of the education systems is to develop quality standards and implement them.

In his speech to lecturers of the National University of Laos, given at a university meeting on 5th April 2012, Mr Samane Viyaket, former president of the National Assembly of Laos, emphasized the importance of improving the training of teachers for the development of Laos explicitly: "In order to develop the country, human resource has to be developed, but first teachers must be developed." Consequently, the teacher is the centre point around which education quality is improved. Moreover, teachers are not merely agents of knowledge transfer; they are vital people who advise, train and act in an exemplary manner.

The Strategic Plan for the Development of Technical and Vocational Education and training 2006–2020 lists the numerous weaknesses and the causes creating the low performance in the TVET system. One of the important reasons described by the plan for the weakness of the TVET system and the quality of teachers is as follows: "The quality of TVET teachers remains mostly very low; teachers lack practical experiences, because they have not been employed in companies or enterprises and/or trained in the pedagogical field before." (MoE 2007, 8).

As a result, the Departments of Technical and Vocational Training (DTVE) and Higher Education (DHE) the Ministry of Education and Sports (MoES), articulated the goal, to be achieved by 2020, for vocational teachers: "Building up vocational teachers for different subjects (technical and pedagogical) at different levels within the country and abroad in order to provide teachers for all TVET institutions sufficiently according to their demand; upgrading teachers for technical and pedagogical subjects and upgrading TVET managers and administrative personnel continuously in order to enable them to follow the ICT development." (MoE 2007, 11-12).

Improvement of the quality and quantity of the education of vocational teachers is all-important. The topic of this study is to create vocational teacher standards at bachelor level. In addition, the study deals with the implementation and evaluation of the results for the purpose of improving the implementation system in the future.

Nowadays, the initial and further education of vocational teachers in Lao PDR does not take place in a systematic manner. Some vocational education institutes (public and private) are permitted to conduct teacher education confined to their capacity and their own needs. If this is to continue, neither the country's needs for a skilled workforce will be met, nor the living conditions of the population improved. (see Singthilath 2012, 2).

2 Reasons for the study

As mentioned already, the TVET sector in Lao PDR cannot meet with the expectations of the labour market in terms of both supply and demand. According to the Asian Development Bank, "The sector and labour market assessments indicate that TVET enrolments are declining in high-demand skill areas and where skill shortages are greatest (e.g., construction), and only a small proportion of companies recruit workers directly from TVET institutions and few companies have any relationship with TVET institutions" (ADB 2010a, 5).

Furthermore, the aforementioned assessments reveal, "employer and trade association interviews indicated a strong negative image of TVET. It was repeatedly stressed that TVET graduates at all levels have to be trained again by the economic units. The training currently being provided in TVET institutions was considered to be exclusively theoretical, and delivered by teachers (sometimes graduates from the TVET school) who do not have the necessary work experience or real skills" (ADB 2010a, 4). In the light of these reports it becomes all the more essential to separate the education of vocational teachers from their alma mater colleges in order to enable quality and evaluation at an academic level. Only then the vicious cycle can be interrupted in which poorly trained students stay at the same college to become poorly qualified vocational teachers to continue the insufficient training of a new generation of vocational students both perpetuating and even worsening the cycle.

A further difficulty is that vocational education, provided by the TVET-sector, increasingly falls short of the demand of the labour market. The labour market assessment identified "five major sectors of current and apparently likely continuing skills shortages" (ADB 2010b, 4): furniture, construction, construction sub-trades (masonry, carpentry, electrical, plumbing etc.), tourism and hospitality, mechanical maintenance and repair trades. The sobering forecast, identified by the assessment, is justified by the fact that the number of skilled workers (certificate level), trained by public TVET institutions under supervision of the MoES has dropped in recent years. 407 of 13,065 students were trained in 2006/07 at certificate level, while in 2008/09 the number dropped to 68 of 17,926. A reverse in this trend cannot be expected in the near future. On the one hand, training in these trades is not attractive to young people, because it has a bad image, on the other hand, the schools are not keen on offering sufficient training, because it is too expensive, too difficult and has a bad reputation that will also reflect on them socially. By contrast, higher diploma programmes (IT, business administration etc.) have become the fastest growing component of TVET, despite an even faster growing surplus of graduates. It can be expected, therefore, that skilled workers must still be recruited from neighbouring countries, Vietnam in particular, to fill the gap.

To provide TVET institutions in Laos with qualified teachers, the first study programme for vocational teachers at Bachelor level was established in September 2004 at the Vocational Teacher Education Department (VTED) at the Faculty of Engineering (FE) / National University of Laos (NUoL) supported by the Lao-German HRDME programme (Human Resource Development for a Market Economy).

Aside from VTED two further institutions are in charge of the education of vocational teachers. The Vocational Education Development Centre (VEDC) has been educating vocational teachers since 1999, albeit at the non-academic level of the Higher Diploma. Unfortunately, despite noteworthy national and international efforts and good progress, neither VTED nor VEDC are able to supply a sufficient number of well-trained teachers (less than 50/year). To alleviate the lack of well-trained teachers, not only VEDC but also several vocational colleges/schools, have been authorized by decree (MoES) to train vocational teachers up to bachelor level (continuing education) as well. Despite being authorized by the Ministry, these approaches have evolved in an uncoordinated manner disregarding commonly recognized standards.

To be able to make qualified statements about the quality of vocational teacher education at VTED, a tracer study was carried out in 2010/11 (cp. Soysouvanh 2011, 13-27). This study followed the aforementioned graduates of VTED providing insight into post-graduate development and experiences. Its aim, amongst many, was to comprehend how former students evaluated their studies in retrospect and what content in particular was important for their professional development. The results of this survey should enable VTED and all institutes of higher education involved in the training of vocational teachers in Lao PDR to indicate deficits in present study programmes and serve as a basis for future changes. This information is useful for the planning and accomplishment of further development of curricula.

When asked about practical relevance of teacher training the graduates certified they did not receive enough practical training. They were lacking sufficient practical exercises and internships related to their major subject as well as to the studies of vocational education and as a result did not feel well prepared for professional life. In particular, they demanded an improvement in practical exercises for the preparation and carrying out of actual lessons. Even though the interviewed graduates value their studies in general as highly beneficial it has become quite clear that the study course of vocational education needs to be fundamentally revised

In summary, it can be said that the TVET-sector of Lao PDR suffers from a bad image caused by its inability to cater to labour market needs and a lack of adjusting to market supply and demand. This latter point concerns skill levels and the significant lack in sectors where training is most needed - and an insufficient number of vocational teachers, whose qualifications are considered less than sufficient for the market needs. One of the worldwide practiced solutions for improving the quality of education systems, albeit using different approaches, is the formulation of standards (see Bergmann/Mulkeen 2011). Aside from the formulation of

standards for degrees in general education and vocational training, teaching standards are also becoming more prevalent.

3 Methodology

Developing standards for vocational teachers in Lao PDR the research team considered

- the theoretical foundation of standards for teachers,
- the specific national preconditions of Lao PDR,
- the experience and expertise of stakeholders as well as members of the RCP-platform,
- already existing standards, and
- supranational standard frameworks.

In conducting the study, a cyclical process has been adhered to. On the theoretical side, a literature review and an analysis of existing standards has been carried out. This is done to take account of the current state of scientific research. Many stakeholders were involved in the research process. Firstly, it was necessary to use the experiences of the persons involved and secondly to strengthen acceptance of the standards developed.

The analysis of literature provided the research team with knowledge on the theoretical foundation of standards, which has to be considered in the development process. According to the areas standards address, the literature distinguishes between institutional standards, process standards, and personnel standards. Moreover, in terms of grouping, Bergmann and Mulkeen (2011, 15) for instance use the terms input standards (defining resource inputs), process standards (related to the processes in education) and outcome standards (referring to learning outcomes or educational achievements). Referring to the purpose of educational standards they can be used (see TT-TVET Consortium 2009; Spöttl 2009)

- for supporting the quality development of educational programmes,
- for creating a common understanding of the quality and content of an educational programme, and
- as a basis for the mutual recognition of study achievements between different educational institutions.

Taking these diverse categories and purposes into consideration it is the study's objective to develop outcome-oriented personnel standards, conducive to the development of curricula for the training of vocational teachers. The standards are applicable for supporting the quality of the education of vocational teachers, but they are not designed for testing and certifying teachers in the first instance.

To broaden the view of the research team and take part in the results collated by others, thus avoiding past mistakes, the decision was made to carry out a comparative analysis of already existing standards for general teachers from England, Germany, Laos and the USA and

vocational teachers from Vietnam. These standards have been analysed for their adequacy as a resource for the development of standards for vocational teachers in Lao PDR. The analysis has been conducted using specific criteria, considering the formal structure, the target group and the purpose of the analysed standards, to find out which characteristics are absolutely crucial and which of these standards may serve as a role model.

For the development of standards of TVET teachers and in particular, to ensure the acceptance of these standards, it was clearly essential to involve the relevant stakeholders in Lao PDR in the process right from the beginning. The Lao stakeholders were chosen to be involved as the target groups in the development process for their significance in practical (e.g. Vocational Schools), political (e.g. Department of Higher Education/MoES) and academic (e.g. National University of Laos) terms and because these institutions represented either the demand or supply side of vocational teacher education. To learn from the experiences of other countries, that is to say institutions in South East Asia and benefit from their expertise, various vocational teacher education institutes, all of them members of the RCP-Platform, have also been involved in the development process.

At different stages of the research project, workshops were conducted with the involvement of the institutions mentioned above. The theoretical work – the foundation of educational standards and the analysis of existing standards – and the carrying out of the workshops have alternated.

At the last stage, the decision was made to correlate the standards evolved so far using the following supranational standard frameworks as benchmarks:

- “Information and Communication Technology – Competency Framework for Teachers” (ICT–CFT), published in 2008 and updated in 2011 by UNESCO
- “Teaching Competency Standards in Southeast Asian Countries”, published in 2010 by SIREP (SEAMEO INNOTECH Regional Education Program).

What were the reasons behind this correlation? Firstly, the very existence of these frameworks, to some extent, forced the team to take them into consideration when drafting the standards. Secondly, the institutions entrusted with the design of these frameworks, understand them as benchmarks for standard development. The research team considers the correlation as absolutely crucial and very useful. Most significantly, aspects that had not been taken into consideration could become visible. At the same time, the team could confirm it was on the right track.

4 Research outcome: “Standards for vocational teacher at Bachelor level in Lao PDR”

The most significant outcome of the study provides standards for vocational teachers (hereinafter referred to as ‘teachers’) in Lao PDR with the aim of promoting and maintaining high-quality teaching practice. The standards describe the competencies anticipated, including

knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviour, required for teachers to carry out their professional duties effectively.

The following standards have been developed on behalf of the Ministry of Education and Sports (MoES) and apply to all teachers working in public and private institutions of technical and vocational education, such as vocational schools, colleges, skills development centres etc.

Standards are structured into the following five competency areas:

- A.** Competency Area of Acting in an exemplary manner
- B.** Competency Area of Educating
- C.** Competency Area of Teaching
- D.** Competency Area of Assessment
- E.** Competency Area of Self-Development and Innovation

Each competency area is subdivided into specific competencies (1. – 16.), illustrated by 80 indicators (1.1 – 16.7).

A. Competency Area of Acting in an exemplary manner	
Teachers are aware of the specific requirements of their profession in terms of attitudes, ethical behaviour and the assertion of their rights and duties.	
1. Internalizing positive attitudes Teachers show a positive attitude towards the nation and the politics of the government and act as a role model for learners and society.	1.1 Support the policy of the government. 1.2 Support the decisions of the government that focus on the social and economic development of the country and implement these decisions within the context of their classroom practices, and generally during professional activities. 1.3 Be members of at least one of the mass organizations and take active part in the activities of the organization. 1.4 Act as a role model for society in general and for the learners entrusted to them particularly by dressing decently, behaving properly and honestly, and in compliance with the constitution and national law.
2. Recognizing National Ethics Teachers consider national ethics during work and in their private lives and put them into practice.	2.1 Respect the fundamental rights of every human being and treat all learners fairly and equally. 2.2 Know, reflect critically and communicate social values and standards based on tradition, religion and culture. 2.3 Respect their position of authority and never use such authority to take advantage of others, or be influenced by others unduly.
3. Respecting Rights and Duties Teachers understand their profession as a public duty, encompassing	3.1 Be familiar with the basic principles and structures of the national educational system. 3.2 Align their professional activities with the three characteristics and five principles of education ¹ , and the needs of the learners. 3.3 Know the legal framework of their profession including their

¹ MoES (2012): National Standards of Curricula (Draft), Vientiane, p. 7

specific responsibilities and obligations.	<p>own rights and duties and act accordingly.</p> <p>3.4 Understand their profession as a teacher as a service to their country and its society.</p> <p>3.5 Work according to scientific standards where appropriate and necessary.</p>
<p>B. Competency Area of Educating</p> <p>Teachers educate learners entrusted to them with great responsibility, and involve other people who are also responsible for the learners' performance (i.e. parents, family members, caregivers).</p>	
<p>4. Considering the diverse backgrounds of learners</p> <p>Teachers know the social, ethnical and cultural living conditions of learners and promote their individual development.</p>	<p>4.1 Know selected pedagogic, sociological and psychological theories of development and socialization of young people.</p> <p>4.2 Be familiar with the impact that culture, ethnicity and gender can have on the educational process.</p> <p>4.3 Consider the cultural, ethnic and social diversity of the respective study group.</p> <p>4.4 Identify disadvantages and provide suitable pedagogical support.</p>
<p>5. Considering the working environment</p> <p>Teachers are closely associated with the working world and the labour market and support learners to orient themselves within this new environment.</p>	<p>5.1 Have knowledge of the practice of working and the working environment in relation to the relevant curricula areas. Connect this knowledge with their own experiences of working and transfer this knowledge to the learners.</p> <p>5.2 Show learners how to apply theoretical knowledge within the practical context of the workplace.</p> <p>5.3 Train together with learners to demonstrate how to plan, organize and cope with routine and non-routine tasks associated with the workplace.</p> <p>5.4 Demonstrate to learners how to select and handle tools, materials, machinery and equipment in an appropriate, responsible and safe way.</p> <p>5.5 Be familiar with legal and practical working conditions and the required occupational health and safety precautions including first aid facilities. Train learners how to recognize these conditions within the work environment.</p>
<p>6. Supporting self-determination</p> <p>Teachers support learners to develop self-confident and self-determined characteristics.</p>	<p>6.1 Know how to support students to develop self-confident and self-determined characteristics.</p> <p>6.2 Encourage learners to make their own decisions, and practice with learners to develop skills in self-determination.</p> <p>6.3 Train together with learners to demonstrate how to deal with personal crises.</p>
<p>7. Communicating and interacting</p> <p>Teachers manage classroom activities and prevent, identify and solve difficulties and conflicts, which occur during the</p>	<p>7.1 Have knowledge of interpersonal communication methods and apply interaction techniques within the learning environment.</p> <p>7.2 Discuss and explain rules with learners to promote respect for one another, and ensure the implementation of rules.</p> <p>7.3 Organize social relationships between learners, colleagues, parents, families, caregivers, companies/employers and the work environment.</p>

<p>education process in classrooms, workshops or generally at school.</p>	<p>7.4 Be able to tackle discipline problems particularly during lessons (unrest, noise, inattention etc.) and to retain control.</p> <p>7.5 Identify and analyse conflicts and their causes and demonstrate the ability either to prevent or to solve them in an appropriate way.</p> <p>7.6 Develop and implement - in cooperation with colleagues - common approaches in dealing with problems and conflicts.</p>
<p>C. Competency Area of Teaching Teachers possess a good command of the teaching and learning process.</p>	
<p>8. Planning lessons Teachers prepare lessons in a professional and appropriate way, considering a wide range of different temporal and organizational arrangements (usual classroom lessons, object-lessons, on-the-job training, workplace based lessons, training courses etc.).</p>	<p>8.1 Know the educational goals of the national legal educational framework and the subject specific curricula.</p> <p>8.2 Know the content of the curricula areas to be taught and demonstrate subject specific literacy.</p> <p>8.3 Know selected teaching methods, general didactic concepts and subject specific didactic concepts, and have skills in choosing appropriate methods and concepts to promote the learners' participation.</p> <p>8.4 Demonstrate a good command of the vocational skills required for the curricula area being taught, and a basic understanding of hardware and software operations, required for the appropriate application of Information and Communication Technology (ICT).</p> <p>8.5 Identify learners' baseline level of knowledge and skills, they have acquired in a formal or non-formal way, and use this information to design and formulate learning objectives, lesson plans, lesson content, and ordering of lesson content (learning sequences).</p> <p>8.6 Organize the lesson content, learning sequences and teaching of specific concepts in a manner that promotes the use of a variety of learning methods (writing, reading, listening, speaking, doing etc.) to encourage active learning and critical thinking.</p> <p>8.7 Demonstrate skills to prepare classroom and workshop environments, and to organize these environments to enable work process oriented training sequences.</p> <p>8.8 Design lesson plans, learning sequences and lesson content in a way that supports learners in gaining work process oriented competencies.</p> <p>8.9 Design lesson plans, learning sequences and lesson content by selecting and combining different content, didactic concepts, teaching methods, teaching media, and communication methods appropriate for learners' diversity and their stage of development.</p> <p>8.10 Incorporate appropriate Information and Communication Technology (ICT) activities into lessons and learning sequences in a way that supports learners' acquisition of subject specific literacy, and encourages and enables learners to use ICT.</p>

<p>9. Giving lessons Teachers give lessons in a factual and professionally correct manner considering a wide range of different temporal and organizational arrangements.</p>	<p>9.1 Have a good command of teaching media, use and application of technical equipment and relevant Information and Communication Technology (ICT). 9.2 Use the advantages of new media and the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) where appropriate to support and improve the learning process. 9.3 Give lessons and conduct learning sequences as planned; listen and respond to learners' questions and needs, and adjust their understanding of teaching concepts where necessary.</p>
<p>10. Supporting the learning process Teachers support the learning process of learners.</p>	<p>10.1 Create a safe, clean and caring learning environment, which promotes an active, co-operative and self-determined way of learning, facilitating a high standard of learning performance. 10.2 Organize and structure the lesson content in ways that promote the learning process of learners. 10.3 Know how different types of learners acquire knowledge and skills. 10.4 Address different types of learners in a supportive way when planning and giving lessons. 10.5 Facilitate learners in learning to know, learning to do, learning to live together and learning to be (The four Pillars of Education²). 10.6 Develop and utilize appropriate teaching and learning resources which promote in particular self-determined learning.</p>
<p>11. Motivating learners Teachers motivate learners and empower them to critically question new knowledge, draw connections and apply knowledge.</p>	<p>11.1 Know, convey and practice selected strategies of learning and self-motivation. 11.2 Know, convey and practice methods of self-determined, self-dependent, critical-thinking (analysis, synthesis, evaluation), and co-operative learning and working. 11.3 Inspire learners to become lifelong learners.</p>
<p>D. Competency Area of Assessment Teachers assess learners in a fair and responsible manner; they promote learners and give advice to young people, parents, family members, caregivers etc.</p>	
<p>12. Considering individual preconditions Teachers diagnose the preconditions of learners and know how they learn. Teachers use this information to support learners and provide appropriate advice.</p>	<p>12.1 Know how different preconditions of individual learners affect the learning process and the interaction within the classroom and/or the workshop environment. 12.2 Identify the learners' baseline level of knowledge, their stage of development, their learning needs, their potential to learn and any learning obstacles. Use this information to plan teaching so the learner development can be promoted appropriately. 12.3 Recognize learning disabilities or other barriers, as well as special talents, and assist these learners appropriately.</p>

² Cp. UNESCO (1996): Learning: The Treasure within. Online: <http://collections.infocollections.org/ukedu/en/d/Jh1767e/3.1.html>. (retrieved 08.09.2012)

	12.4 Cooperate with colleagues and the school administration in guiding and counselling learners, parents, family members, caregivers etc.
13. Measuring learner performance Teachers measure the performance of learners based on transparent criteria and communicate the results in an appropriate way.	13.1 Have knowledge of the different types of assessment methods and tools. 13.2 Design assessment tools that correspond to learning goals (theoretical and practical), the learners' level of ability and understanding, and the taxonomy of learning objectives (e.g. Bloom ³), particularly emphasizing critical thinking (analysis, synthesis, evaluation). 13.3 Assign meaningful homework for learners to deepen, apply, consolidate and practice newly acquired knowledge. Evaluate homework adequately to measure the learners' progress. 13.4 Communicate assessment results to learners within a reasonable period of time in a beneficial way that provides fair and encouraging feedback. 13.5 Analyse and interpret assessment results to plan for future teaching and learning processes. 13.6 Use assessment results and teachers' reflections for identifying necessary interventions and modifying teaching practice.
E. Competency Area of Self-Development and Innovation Teachers develop their knowledge and skills continually and make a valuable contribution to the development of their country.	
14. Accepting professional requirements Teachers are aware of the specific requirements of their profession and promote collaborative working amongst the staff team.	14.2 Use working hours and equipment, including the available Information and Communication Technology (ICT), in an effective, responsible and efficient manner to enhance productivity. 14.2 Have knowledge and strategies to deal with workload, stress and other work challenges. 14.3 Communicate, interact and co-operate with colleagues. 14.4 Work, if possible, in a team and support each other to prepare lesson content, ordering of lesson content (learning sequences) and to share workload within the teaching team.
15. Continuing professional development Teachers understand their profession as a lifelong learning process	15.1 Perform administrative work and complete documentation, recording evidence of their own work and its results. 15.2 Apply selected methods for evaluating the teaching-learning process and identify areas of improvement to develop their own professional knowledge and practice. 15.3 Participate in self-evaluation and provide constructive feedback to colleagues. Integrate feedback into work practices to improve learning and teaching. 15.4 Know where to get assistance and use these opportunities to develop knowledge and skills. Provide assistance by coaching and mentoring colleagues, particularly student teachers and

³ Cp. Bloom, Benjamin et al. (1956): Taxonomy of educational objectives: The classification of educational goals. Handbook I: Cognitive domain. New York

	<p>novices.</p> <p>15.5 Acquire the comprehensive ability of learning to know, learning to do, learning to live together and learning to be (The four Pillars of Education⁴).</p> <p>15.6 Use individual and group, formal and non-formal training opportunities on a regular basis to keep up-to-date with new professional developments and work practices in vocational education, as well as digital literacy and skills in the application of Information and Communication Technology (ICT).</p> <p>15.7 Cooperate with colleagues to explore and contemplate contemporary educational issues and research to incorporate new knowledge into work practices.</p>
<p>16. Participating in innovation Teachers participate in the planning and implementation of school projects and development proposals.</p>	<p>16.1 Have knowledge of the guiding principles of the education law, the national educational policy and the technical and vocational education development strategy.</p> <p>16.2 Have knowledge of the vision and mission of their school, and support their school in implementing activities that contribute to the development of the community, the district, the province and the country.</p> <p>16.3 Support the educational policy of their country and the mission of their school and its various study courses in an active and innovative way.</p> <p>16.4 Collect information about relevant stakeholders and their needs in relation to the school environment (community members, industry, companies/employers, general public etc.) and apply this information when planning and developing school services.</p> <p>16.5 Support the school administration in developing the school in order to achieve its mission successfully.</p> <p>16.6 Support the school administration in planning and realizing social and extracurricular activities and projects.</p> <p>16.7 Support the school administration in integrating Information and Communication Technology (ICT) into school activities and in providing equitable access to all colleagues and learners.</p>

5 Implementation of standards for TVET teacher education

The development of the standards will only be useful if the standards are actually applied. Therefore it is absolutely essential to continue the work of developing standards and to ensure the implementation with emphasis. For implementation we propose three key elements:

⁴ Cp. UNESCO (1996): Learning: The Treasure within. Online: <http://collections.infocollections.org/ukedu/en/d/Jh1767e/3.1.html>. Last accessed: 08.09.2012

- the appropriate dissemination of the standards
- the development of standard-based curricula and the accomplishment of these curricula at the university
- the establishment of a concept of mentoring at the vocational schools

The appropriate dissemination of the standards is the first crucial point. In a first step on 11th February 2013 the MoES approved and declared the developed standards by decree as binding for the education of vocational teachers at bachelor level in Lao PDR (see MoES 2013). Furthermore, it is important, not only to announce the standards, but to inform a good number of the key actors in vocational education throughout the whole country. For the acceptance of the standards two groups – aside from the stakeholders already involved - are crucial: these are the headmasters of vocational schools, and the administrative staff in provincial educational departments in Lao PDR. In December this year therefore, two members of the research team will present the developed standards to the aforementioned key actors nationwide in three workshops (Luang Prabang, Vientiane, Pakse) and illustrate their significance for the education of vocational teachers.

The second and more institutional way to implement the standards addresses the system of higher education for vocational teachers. Currently the ministry in charge is working on a new law on vocational education. It is anticipated that this law emphasize the developed standards as a compulsory regulation for teacher education. Additionally it is necessary to develop a new standard-based curriculum. The curriculum must be considered as a national curriculum, mandatory for all institutions, educating vocational teachers at bachelor level. To apply the standard-based curriculum the academic institutions must be supported. The study proposes coaching for lecturers in vocational education at the National University of Laos as the correct and proper means for strengthening their work process knowledge and improving the quality of their lessons. Corresponding measures will be accomplished in winter 2013 and spring 2014.

The development of curricula described above, is essential to the improvement of the educative quality of vocational teachers but not sufficient as this study proposes to establish a mentoring concept, accomplishing the standards at the vocational schools. This mentoring concept is to focus on “fresh” graduates, who need qualified support in the transition process from university to professional life as well as “old” teachers, who need to be upgraded, in line with the standards. Experienced teachers act as mentors, but they must always remain open to new developments. Suitable candidates should be nominated by their own school.

6 Conclusion and recommendations

In terms of the educational level, the drafted standards apply to vocational teachers at a bachelor level and the indicators are formulated accordingly. If in the future an extension is possible and feasible, these standards could provide a good starting position encompassing, for instance, the master level as the next level in career opportunity.

It must be noted that the development of standards for vocational teachers is a difficult process for there are only a few comparable standards available that could possibly serve as a role model (see Wilbers 2010, 33). In this regard every state is challenged when attempting to develop specific standards for vocational teachers.

Concerning the proposals for implementation it must be noted that no recorded documentation or evaluations concerning the process of implementation of standards for vocational teachers exist. This appears to represent a quite conspicuous research gap.

It is necessary to review the developed standards periodically to prevent them becoming outdated. Therefore the study strongly recommends conducting an evaluation of the standards in about five years. Furthermore, it is recommended to go beyond the measures already described, by complementing this top-down process with a bottom-up process. The fact, that teachers at vocational schools are not sufficiently qualified, has been shown not only in various studies, but the schools themselves even see deficits - and can describe them in a great deal more detail and applied to their own needs. Therefore we recommend the carrying out of a qualitative survey of different vocational schools (in urban and in rural areas) concerning these questions. In addition to the focus on the standards, the results of such a study would provide valuable information for the improvement of curricula for the training and education of vocational teachers.

7 Acknowledgements

The fact that the standards described above have been developed and enacted successfully is a good example for a fruitful scientific cooperation between different regional teacher education institutions. It also shows how successful the Faculty of Engineering cooperates with the GIZ in Lao PDR within the framework of the TVET Teacher Education Programme (TTEP). Therefore the Faculty of Engineering explicitly thanks the researcher team for its excellent work, the cooperating institutions for their valuable input, GIZ-Laos and GIZ-China for providing financial support and the RCP-Secretariat (<http://www.rcp-platform.com/>) for facilitating the cooperation and enabling scientific consultancy. Furthermore the Faculty thanks Prof Uwe Elsholz for his tireless efforts and professional scientific supervision.

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