
INTERNATIONAL LABOUR ORGANIZATION

GDFTE/2018/7

**Global Dialogue Forum on Employment Terms
and Conditions in Tertiary Education**

Geneva
18–20 September 2018

Consensus points of the Forum ¹

Challenges and opportunities with respect to employment terms and conditions in tertiary education

1. Quality tertiary education is an important means for economic, social and cultural development. It is integral to Sustainable Development Goal 4 on quality education and Sustainable Development Goal 8 on economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all. Tertiary education is vital for preparing learners for social responsibility and employment, preparing future teachers, providing lifelong learning and research, and teaching core skills and basic knowledge for life.
2. Massification, growing privatization, technological advancements, and changing patterns of funding and labour market demands have resulted in both challenges and opportunities in tertiary education. Access to tertiary education has greatly increased over the past two decades, especially for those traditionally unable to access the education system, providing greater life chances and employability for learners and teachers, as well as allowing them to better adapt to changes and the increasing diversity of fields of study. These trends have also in some cases resulted in understaffing, hiring of inadequately qualified teaching personnel, the granting of low-quality degrees, variation in student fees, and interference in institutional autonomy.

Steps governments and social partners can take to better address the challenges and take advantage of opportunities in tertiary education

3. Fundamental principles and rights at work, social protection and applicable international labour standards apply to all workers in tertiary education, regardless of the nature of their employment relationship. Staff under various employment arrangements, such as full-time, part-time, fixed-term, replacement and temporary, should have access to decent working conditions, as well as opportunities for career development. This should be guaranteed through appropriate regulations and social dialogue, which establish, among other things, measures to promote merit in recruitment and career development, diversity, quality

¹ These points of consensus were adopted by the Global Dialogue Forum on 20 September 2018. In accordance with established procedures, they will be submitted to the Governing Body of the ILO at its 335th Session in March 2019 for its consideration.

assurance and continuing professional development. Relevant regulations and collective agreements should be sufficiently adaptable and effectively enforced.

4. Gender equality, inclusion and non-discrimination are pivotal to improving employment terms and conditions in tertiary education. Strategies for promoting equity could involve establishing and implementing quotas and/or targets in hiring, addressing disparities in pay structures and benefits, addressing structural discrimination in tenure and promotion procedures, and changing institutional cultures. Promoting women's participation in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) disciplines and in research is supportive of this direction.
5. Collegial governance and social dialogue in tertiary education, including collective bargaining, are critical to ensure quality education, promote academic freedom and maintain working conditions that may help make tertiary teaching an attractive option for professionals and graduates. All staff, regardless of employment status, should have the opportunity to participate in social dialogue, including for example in efforts that promote staff development, mobility and career development opportunities.

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

6. Governments and social partners should, with support of the ILO, as appropriate, engage in effective social dialogue in its various forms, including collective bargaining, in order to promote decent work and productive employment in public and private tertiary education.
7. Governments should:
 - (a) adopt, implement and enforce national laws and regulations to ensure that the fundamental principles and rights at work and applicable international labour standards protect and apply to all tertiary education workers;
 - (b) ensure that employment relationships in tertiary education are fully aligned with decent work principles as well as with national law and practice;
 - (c) ensure sufficient public funding for tertiary education, infrastructure and research, and for professional development of tertiary education teaching and non-teaching personnel, and the effective use of such funding;
 - (d) develop and promote quality standards and adequate oversight of public and private tertiary education providers;
 - (f) consider organizing national education forums to start bringing together social partners and other stakeholders to engage in consultation on education policy, without undermining social dialogue mechanisms;
 - (g) through appropriate institutions, promote international recognition of qualifications, mobility of tertiary education workers and institutional autonomy, and cooperate to counter the issuance of unofficial academic degrees.

8. The Office should:

- (a) take additional concrete steps to promote the principles of the 1997 UNESCO Recommendation concerning the Status of Higher-Education Teaching Personnel,² including through regional activities, and through support measures for the Joint ILO/UNESCO Committee of Experts on the Application of the Recommendations concerning Teaching Personnel (CEART) with a view to raising the visibility and effectiveness of its work;
- (b) undertake and disseminate research on: terms and conditions of employment of education support personnel; obstacles to, and good practices in, achieving gender equity in tertiary education; as well as policies and practices in the use of contingent fixed-term employment in tertiary education which recognize the need for both flexibility and decent work. The research is to inform possible future action which could include a tripartite meeting.

² “... higher-education teaching personnel’ means all those persons in institutions or programmes of higher education who are engaged to teach and/or to undertake scholarship and/or to undertake research and/or to provide educational services to students or to the community at large.” UNESCO Recommendation concerning the Status of Higher-Education Teaching Personnel, 11 Nov. 1997, Part I. Art. 1(f).