



## Concept note

# Transforming higher education through its teachers: 25th Anniversary of UNESCO's Recommendation concerning the Status of Higher-Education Teaching Personnel

**7 October 2022, 14:00-15:30 – Paris time (GMT+2)**

**Registration:** [here](#)

*Interpretation in English, French and Spanish will be available.*

## Background

On World Teachers' Day in 2022, we take the opportunity to commemorate the 25th anniversary of the adoption of the [UNESCO Recommendation concerning the Status of Higher-education Teaching Personnel](#). This recommendation complements the ILO/UNESCO 1966 Recommendation concerning the Status of Teachers. The 1997 Recommendation provides guidance to teachers, researchers, administrators, governments, union representatives, and other stakeholders to address the status and working conditions of teachers in higher education, including post-secondary and tertiary level institutions. The Recommendation relies on the Committee of Experts on the Application of the Recommendation concerning the Teaching Personnel (CEART) that meet every three years to monitor the implementation of the recommendations and review allegations of non-compliance.

Higher education has undergone profound changes in recent years, marked by massification, technological innovation, marketization, privatization leading to increased competitiveness nationally and internationally for public and private financial support. Understaffing, casualization of employment, the hiring of unqualified teaching personnel, increased workload, stress and poorer working conditions are some of the consequences that increase pressure on higher education personnel with implications

for quality. Another discernible trend is the increasing stratification of the higher-education workforce into professionals who focus on research versus those who teach. Linked to this, inequities and underrepresentation of women and marginalized groups in permanent faculty positions and hierarchical structures continue. While teachers and researchers in higher education shape the intellectuals and innovators of tomorrow, they are overlooked in policy discussions concerning their work and status. Yet given the plethora of challenges higher-education personnel face, the transformation of higher education cannot happen fully without the transformation of teachers and researchers .

Since the central mission of higher education is the production of knowledge, outreach, *and* education, the requirements for the qualifications and competencies of higher education personnel are broad. Professors are often evaluated and valued based on their individual research achievements and for transmitting productive skills, rather than based on their added value in society. Yet, it is the development of profound understanding, reflexive attitudes, the fostering of collaborative relationships with the community and between generations and the transmission of socio-culturally relevant values that enable students to development and contribute to the sustainable transformation of their environments and society. Yet while higher education personnel benefit from more autonomy, and professional development in the form of peer learning at research conferences, many higher education personnel have had little to no teacher training and lack pedagogical, digital, socio-emotional and other skills to teach effectively.

Therefore, the [Futures of Education Report](#), issued in 2021 by UNESCO, emphasizes the importance of giving greater value to the teaching work of higher education personnel, support their pedagogical learning, personal and collaborative research, encourage working collaboratively within and across disciplines and between higher education institutions since collaboration, cooperation and interdisciplinarity promote richer knowledge production and sharing, and is key to solve significant societal and economic challenges and crises such as conflict, technological disruption and climate change. Moreover, intellectual property rights and associated cost barriers can undermine efforts, while the need for mobility can further underline collaboration. Lastly, education transformation that builds stronger collaboration between actors from primary to higher education not just through training, but through communities of practice supporting a culture of teachers as lifelong learners and co-researchers in their classrooms can strengthen the new social contract of teachers across levels.

## About the event

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The 25th anniversary of the 1997 Recommendation follows in the wake of the World Higher Education Conference, organized by UNESCO in May 2022 and the Transforming Education Summit convened by the UN Secretary General in September 2022. Panellists and invited speakers will engage in debates with the goal to address challenges identified in the Futures of Education Report calling for a new social contract for education. Indicative topics will include:

**Higher-education teachers' working conditions and the role of teachers' voices:** In view of the renewal of the educational mission of higher education personnel, the various challenges such as hybridization of higher education and competition for public financing, students and research grants, higher education teaching personnel are key to education transformation and thus need to be empowered, enabled and motivated. Teacher unions and associations play an important role as support networks for teachers and catalysts of change. Social dialogue mechanisms and processes are critical to provide a forum for teachers and their representatives to engage in collective bargaining and discussions with governments and education providers about the future of education by co-developing policies that promote their role in transforming higher education, protect their status and working conditions, and advocate for inclusion and equity in the management and organization of higher education.

**Professional development:** Higher education professionals require several forms of knowledge, skills and values to be effective and respond to a changing education environment. These include, for example, new forms of teaching that encourage students to cooperate with each other and with the community through student-centred methodologies, including seminar dialogues, field studies, action research, etc., rather than focussing narrowly on traditional lecture and didactic methods. ICT and digital literacy and socio-emotional skills are also crucial to support student learning and the acquisition of 21st century skills. Initial teacher education and continuous professional development delivered by higher education institutions need to be reformulated and strengthened to improve teacher education. Neither universities nor schools are able to undertake teacher preparation on their own. Therefore, a relationship-based approach for teacher education that builds new spaces and approaches where multiple actors come together is critical.

**Collaboration, mobility and international cooperation:** The Futures of Education report emphasise the importance to consider teaching as a collaborative profession and teachers working together in teams. Institutional commitments are critical to foster cooperation, collaboration and an interdisciplinary approach. Partnerships among universities and higher education personnel also need to be supported to strengthen cooperation and the co-production of knowledge. Mobility is a key dimension of the [Global Convention on the recognition of qualifications among higher education teaching personnel](#). Its entry into force will strengthen the circulation of knowledge and research between education systems – which includes the mobility of students, researchers and faculty while understanding and respecting the diversity of the States Parties' higher-education systems. Knowledge sharing can also be enhanced through open access reflecting the plurality and diversity of knowing and approaching knowledge.

## Agenda

Wednesday, 7 October 2022	
14:00 – 14:05 Zoom	<p><b>Welcome and opening remarks</b></p> <p><b>Mr. Borhene Chakroun</b>, Director, Division for Policies and Lifelong Learning Systems, UNESCO</p>
14:05 – 14:15	<p><b>Introduction to the 1997 Recommendation and the work of the CEART facing today's global challenges, including previous allegations where appropriate</b></p> <p>Presentation by CEART member,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Ms. Susan Webb</b>, Professor of Education at Monash University, Australia</li> </ul>
14:15 – 15:00	<p><b>Panel Discussion on the transformative role of higher education personnel:</b></p> <p><b>Moderator:</b> <b>Mr. Carlos Vargas Tamez</b>, Chief of Section for Teacher Development, UNESCO and Head of the Secretariat of the International Task Force on Teachers for Education 2030 (TTF)</p> <p><b>Panelists:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Ms. Randi Weingarten</b>, President of the American Federation of Teachers, AFT</li> <li>• <b>Dr. Budd Hall</b>, Professor with the School of Public Administration,</li> </ul>

	<p>University of Victoria and Co-Chair of the UNESCO Chair in Community Based Research and Social Responsibility in Higher Education</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Mr. Francesc Pedro</b>, Director, International Institute for Higher Education at UNESCO</li> </ul>
<b>15:00 – 15:20</b>	<b>Q&amp;A</b>
<b>15:20 – 15:30</b>	<p><b>Closing remarks</b></p> <p><b>Mr. Sobhi Tawil</b>, Director, Future of Learning and Innovation Team, UNESCO</p>