



# Vocational education and training policy briefs 2024

## DENMARK



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# 1. Introduction

*This policy brief <sup>(1)</sup> produced by Cedefop presents a snapshot of vocational education and training (VET) policy developments in [country] between 2020 and the end of 2024. It presents the context and the challenges the country faces, a selection of the latest VET-related statistics as well as the national priorities until 2030 identified in the [Danish national implementation plan](#) (Government of Denmark, 2022). This policy brief provides information from Cedefop monitoring and analysis on the implementation of the [Council Recommendation on VET](#) and [Osnabrück Declaration](#) and contributes to shaping new EU priorities in VET as of 2026 and informing the mid-term evaluation of the Council Recommendation on VET.*

## 2. National VET context and challenges

### 2.1 National VET context

Danish VET is based on a tripartite governance system between the State, employers and employees. The Ministry of Children and Education manages the system. It is responsible for the implementation of the relevant legal framework, approves and accredits the VET providers and is responsible for administering VET funding. Social partners have a leading role in curriculum development, the dual organisation of VET, and monitoring the quality of VET provision (Cedefop & University College Copenhagen [UCC], 2023).

Their participation in the governing boards of VET providers ensures the labour market relevance of VET. The social partners also play a crucial role in funding the system through the Employers' reimbursement fund (AUB). AUB coordinates funding for both apprenticeships and adult vocational training (AMU) for employees.

VET in Denmark has a twofold purpose: it promotes lifelong learning and meets labour market demands. Specifically, it consists of a formal VET system and an adult education and training system. The two systems offer equivalent qualifications at various levels, enabling horizontal permeability.

VET is regulated via tripartite and other political agreements with a time span of 3 to 5 years.

The 2014 tripartite agreement on better and more attractive VET was a major reform instrument. This still ongoing reform, also known as the 2015 reform, has set many of the current VET priorities and consequent quantitative targets. It paved the way for the agreement on strengthened practical skills in primary school (From primary school to skilled worker) in 2018 which contributed to the development of practical skills in all VET programmes such as the [adult VET \(EUV\) programmes](#) for people over the age of 25 and the [combined vocational and general upper secondary education \(EUX\) programmes](#). The 2015 reform was also the main driver for establishing [Knowledge centres for VET](#). 10 of

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<sup>(1)</sup> See also the previous edition: Cedefop. (2024). [Vocational education and training policy briefs 2023 – Denmark](#). Cedefop monitoring and analysis of vocational education and training policies.

these centres materialised in 2017, supporting innovation and excellence and effective labour market VET relevance.

In 2023, Denmark launched a [comprehensive reform plan](#) for the entire education system (ReferNet Denmark & Cedefop, 2023c).

## 2.2 Challenges

The main challenges Denmark has faced between 2020 and 2024 include persisting labour shortages, especially in the healthcare sector, low VET attractiveness, ambitious targets regarding the education attainment especially of young people under 25, adapting VET to the skills needs of the twin transition and shortages in qualified teaching staff.

A central challenge is the pervasive labour and skills shortage, with an estimated need for approximately 99 000 more skilled workers by 2030 (European Commission, 2024). These shortages are prominent in sectors like healthcare, long-term care, construction, ICT, and engineering, and are considered by the Danish as hindering EU competitiveness and transitions. Danish businesses report difficulty in recruitment.

Addressing these shortages is complicated by a low level of interest among young people in choosing VET, particularly immediately after completing compulsory education. Enrolment rates are below national targets and the EU average. This is partly attributed to a perception of academic pathways being superior, referred to as education snobbery (Christensen & Juul-Wiese, 2024). Increasing the number of VET applicants is deemed essential to meet workforce needs.

Furthermore, VET systems must adapt to evolving skills needs, particularly those driven by the green and digital transitions. Denmark, a leader in green innovation, requires qualified personnel to meet its climate targets, and shortages already exist in directly affected areas like ICT and engineering.

A critical challenge impacting the quality of education, including VET, is the lack of qualified teaching staff. According to Danish VET school leaders, these shortages hindered their ability to provide quality education (OECD, 2024). In addition, ageing of VET teachers in Denmark is more pronounced compared to general education teachers and VET teachers in other EU countries.

Additional challenges include the low completion rate of upper secondary VET learners compared to the national target, concerns about the NEET rate (youth not in employment, education, or training) for the 18-24 age group, and the need to upgrade the basic skills of both young and adult population, including migrants.

## 3. National VET policy priorities

The foundation for many of Denmark's VET priorities was significantly shaped by the 2014 agreement on better and more attractive vocational education. The Danish national implementation plan includes priorities for challenges, identified as early as 2014, and priorities exacerbated by the twin transition and the targets set by the Danish Climate Act of 2020, namely:

(a) increase participation in VET:

A primary priority remains to significantly increase participation in VET and apprenticeship, with a specific focus on apprenticeships in the healthcare sector. This is driven by the pressing need for more skilled workers. Attracting more young people to choose VET is essential to meet these workforce needs. 'Education snobbery' (Christensen & Juul-Wiese, 2024) is seen as a key obstacle that adversely impacts enrolment rates.

(b) increase education attainment of young people:

Denmark's overall priority is to increase education attainment, especially for those under the age of 25. More specifically it aims to increase the completion rate of upper secondary VET students by 2025, reduce by half the number of NEETs by 2030, and get most young people (and immigrants) (90%) that have no qualification other than lower secondary education to obtain an upper secondary VET or general qualification by 2030. Denmark will also work on the improvement of basic skills for both young people and adults.

(c) make VET fit for the green and digital transitions:

Ensuring VET is adaptable and relevant for the twin (green and digital) transitions is a critical priority. This involves providing opportunities for the population to upskill and reskill to acquire the necessary competences for these evolving demands. Given Denmark's ambitious climate targets and leadership in green innovation, filling related demanding job positions with qualified personnel is necessary.

(d) ensure a sufficient supply of qualified VET teachers:

The existence of qualified teaching staff is essential for addressing skills mismatches and shortages and implementing the reforms. This is particularly relevant for the VET sector, which faces shortages of qualified VET teachers. The skillset of the existing (VET) teachers is also another challenging issue due to the skills upgrading needs brought about by the twin transition.

## 4. Main policy developments in 2020-24

### 4.1 Increase participation in VET

Denmark has been implementing various measures to increase participation in VET and apprenticeship contracts, with particular focus on apprenticeships in the healthcare sector. The following developments took place between 2020 and 2024.

The [pilot EUD 8/9 programme](#) (Cedefop & ReferNet, 2025) initially aims to support lower secondary students at risk of not completing youth education by connecting them with VET opportunities. It is a continuation of a previous pilot. The programme allows selected 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> graders (i.e. [learners of general education, lower secondary schools](#)) (Eurydice, 2025) to follow a reduced core curriculum and spend about two days weekly on hands-on VET electives at VET schools. After running in a limited form from 2020 to 2022, a new phase was launched in 2023, expanding the programme to allow all 98 municipalities to offer it to their learners, with specific funding allocated for 2024 and 2025. Furthermore, in 2024, the Danish Agency for Education and Quality (STUK) announced another application round for municipalities, extending the pilot until the academic year 2025/26. This initiative seeks to identify effective ways to support learners towards VET.

In 2023 and 2024, the implementation of the [Tripartite Agreement on Danish VET apprenticeships](#) of 2020 has become a regular practice since 2022. The initiatives launched in previous years - such as financial incentives and the use of trained mediators - remained in place to support the ongoing effort to meet the 80% apprenticeship target (Cedefop, 2024). VET providers continued their role in facilitating matches between students and companies. Preparations also began for the scheduled 2025 evaluation, which will assess the effectiveness of the initiatives and consider potential adjustments to funding.

Drawing on the [agreement for more skilled workers in healthcare](#), Denmark initiated specific social healthcare education (SOSU) measures in 2023-24. Key developments focused on enhancing SOSU programme completion, addressing dropout causes through systematic data analysis. Specifically, a pilot and development project at SOSU schools was active in 2023 and continued into 2024, testing initiatives to boost completion rates, culminating in a 2024 agreement between the government and most Parliamentary parties to improve the quality of SOSU programmes (ReferNet Denmark & Cedefop, 2024a). Furthermore, substantial funding from late 2023 supports overall quality improvements and teacher upskilling indirectly benefiting these initiatives. The ongoing evaluation of the SOSU pilot will inform future policy decisions.

In 2023, the initiative [Role models in youth guidance](#) was actively implemented, continuing under renewed funding until 2027. In June 2024, a parliamentary agreement was reached extending the initiative for an indefinite period. Consequently, the allocated budget will increase significantly from 2025 onwards and will expand the beneficiaries pool to [preparatory basic education and training \(FGU\)](#) <sup>(2)</sup> learners, in addition to grades 7-10 of [general education lower secondary schools](#).

The [Tripartite agreement on better and more flexible continuing VET](#) <sup>(3)</sup> was signed anew in 2023, thus extending previous tripartite efforts in continuing VET. The agreement is designed to address challenges within the adult education system, ensuring the Danish workforce is equipped for future labour market needs through long-term investments in

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<sup>(2)</sup> The preparatory basic education and training programme for young people (under the age of 25) was introduced in 2019 as an alternative route to acquire a general or vocational qualification. The programmes typically last up to two years, predominantly targeting young people below the age of 25 who have not completed upper secondary education, who are unemployed or are not enrolled in any education or training programme and may lack the qualifications for admission to VET. FGU comprise three tracks:

- (a) basic production education (PGU): is a workshop-based education with a high level of practical learning for learners who wish to proceed to vocational training or become better qualified to enter the labour market;
- (b) general basic education (AGU): is an education in basic subjects such as Danish, mathematics, English and the natural sciences with a view to practical applications of the curriculum for learners who wish to proceed to general education or VET;
- (c) basic vocational education (EGU). EGU is mainly traineeship-based (75% of work-based learning), 1/3 school), is for learners who will benefit in their progression from a workplace environment and who wish to continue their education and training or become better qualified to enter the labour market.

<sup>(3)</sup> In Denmark continuing VET are considered the [AMU programmes](#). There are around 3 000 AMU programmes with an average duration of one week. These are usually modular programmes.

adult, continuing (AMU) and higher adult VET providing a sustainable financial framework, of approximately EUR 48 million annually adult vocational training (AMU) and higher adult VET activities <sup>(4)</sup>. Measures promoted include forming alliances with companies to engage low-skilled workers in adult education, providing financial incentives for institutions, and supporting outreach services to businesses (Ministry of Children and Education, 2023).

Legal interventions in 2021 expanded the eligibility and upskilling provisions of the [regional education fund](#), ensuring job centres offer guidance and short courses in cooperation with regional authorities. In practice, in both 2023 and 2024, the fund remained operational and ran as regular practice. Consequently, regional education lists identifying labour market needs and relevant short courses were compiled and published twice yearly.

The [Job-VEU model](#) is a key initiative designed to address labour market mismatches and enable the upskilling of both employed and unemployed individuals through short training programmes. This collaborative model involves companies, job centres, and social partners working together to identify needs and coordinate training. Agreed in 2017 and implemented since 2018, its purpose is to solve recruitment challenges using credit-bearing courses. In practice, the Job-VEU model was operational and ran as regular practice throughout both 2023 and 2024. Positioned among other key labour market initiatives, it supports the national priority of equipping the Danish workforce to meet the high demand for skilled labour.

## 4.2 Increase education attainment of young people

This priority has three components: increasing completion rates for upper secondary VET students, reducing by half NEETs, and ensuring that most young people (90%) under the age of 25 complete either VET or general upper secondary education by 2030.

In November 2023, a comprehensive political agreement was reached to strengthen [FGU's](#) framework and ensure financial stability, allocating funding of approximately EUR 18 million and funds for upgrades. This agreement also granted FGU more teaching flexibility. Subsequently, in 2024, an Act was approved implementing this agreement. Crucially, this Act introduced a bridging course at FGU schools for selected [9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> graders](#) and allowed their assessment for FGU while still in 9th grade under municipal guidance. Furthermore, it simplified FGU administration.

## 4.3 Make VET fit for the green and digital transitions

Adapting VET to meet the competence requirements arising from the EU and Danish planning in relation to the twin, specifically the green, transition, is a priority for the country. Providing up- and reskilling opportunities for acquiring relevant competences is a component of this overarching goal.

The [Prepared for the future IV - more skilled workers for the green transition agreement](#) is a significant initiative addressing Denmark's need for a skilled workforce to

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<sup>(4)</sup> In Denmark, there are different opportunities for young people (under 25 years-old) and adults (over 25 years old). For example at EQF level 5 young people can enrol in [academy professional programmes \(KVU\)](#) whereas adults may enrol in [Further adult education programmes \(VVU\)](#) (equivalent to KVU but for adults).

achieve ambitious climate goals, with the overall funding of EUR 67.1 million (DKK 500 million). It is implemented as part of a holistic education reform plan. The primary objectives of this agreement are to improve VET provision, so students gain the right skillset for the green transition, which contributes to enhancing VET attractiveness. This agreement was reached in 2024, and its implementation began that year. Under this agreement, approximately EUR 28.2 million (DKK 210 million) is allocated from 2024 to 2028 to VET schools to invest in modern green equipment and integrate green transition into standards and curricula (Ministry of Children and Education, 2024).

Denmark has been establishing specialised [climate VET schools](#) since 2023 to train skilled workers for the green economy and serve as innovation hubs in this field. These institutions aim to equip learners with skills crucial for sectors such as energy transformation, sustainable construction, and climate-friendly agriculture. Regarding funding, approximately EUR 14 million annually from 2024 onwards was allocated as part of the Finance Act for 2023. The funds for 2023 were specifically distributed as a one-year special grant to these schools. Subsequently, a key development in September 2024 was the government's nomination of the [three specific climate VET schools](#). Consequently, the funds (included in the Finance Act 2024) will be distributed from 2024 onwards to support the ongoing establishment and operation of these dedicated green VET institutions.

Denmark's [knowledge centres for VET](#) (ReferNet Denmark & Cedefop, 2024b), suggested in the 2015 reform, function as centres of excellence providing knowledge and inspiration to steer VET towards industry needs, with a special emphasis on the green transition. Placed within VET colleges, they collaborate with other institutions and industry. In 2023, funds were allocated to establish the 11<sup>th</sup> centre dedicated to soil and agriculture, specifically to support green transition and technology in that sector. The centre was established in 2024. Moreover, a significant agreement in June 2024 secured the centres' sustainability over time (or 'permanence' in the Danish context) <sup>(5)</sup> from 2025 with EUR 3.6 million in annual funding.

Responding to national priorities for the green transition, prior to the *Prepared for the future IV agreement*, Denmark actively invested in [funding green VET skills](#) in 2023 and 2024. In 2023, funding measures were operational as regular practice. In 2024, future funding was secured through a parliamentary agreement. Specifically, EUR 29 million from EU funds will support green equipment, teacher upskilling, and the development and testing of training programmes in 2025-26. VET providers dealing both with youth and adult learners will benefit from this allocation of funds.

The [Green entrepreneurial funding pool](#) was operational from 2021 to 2023, aiming to foster knowledge on green entrepreneurship among VET teachers and students. In 2023, EUR 1.4 million was allocated and fully utilised by year-end in 18 projects involving eligible VET providers and collaborating partners. A significant development occurred in 2024, as

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<sup>(5)</sup> In Denmark, in their initial phase all measures/actions are regulated by agreements with a specific lifespan. There are two options to extend the lifespan, either to reach another extension agreement or reach an agreement with indefinite (permanent as it is called) lifespan.

the funding pool was not renewed, effectively marking its completion. Consequently, the initiative concluded, having run for its intended period.

The [Education lift](#), as an upskilling tool, contributes to preparing individuals for evolving job requirements, including those in green industries. Although it was introduced before 2021, it was extended for an indefinite period in 2023 and is designed as part of a broader set of similar measures/schemes to reduce unemployment by providing competence development through job-oriented training, primarily for those over 30. The scheme applies to unemployment benefit recipients over the age of 30 who are unskilled or have an outdated qualification. The vocational training programmes that unemployed people can start with 110% unemployment benefit are listed in the positive list, which includes programmes in sectors with expected shortages in qualified personnel; the sectors in need of green skills have a prominent position in this list (European Commission, 2024).

#### 4.4. Ensure a sufficient supply of qualified VET teachers

Denmark has taken the following actions for ensuring supply of qualified VET teachers. As part of the major [education reform](#) launched in 2023, the Prepared for the future II – freedom and depth initiative began with the aim of reforming primary and lower secondary education (Ministry of Children and Education, 2024). The initiative contains several measures for teachers, mostly professional development and school-based training. Moreover, the [Prepared for the future IV - more skilled workers for the green transition agreement](#) allocates around EUR 12.1 million (DKK 90 million) for 2024-28 for in-service training of VET teachers to update their green skills.

## 5. Statistical information in relation to EU targets

Denmark demonstrates a high rate in terms of the employability of recent IVET graduates (20-34 years old). This percentage stood at 87.7% in 2024, 7.7 percentage points above the EU-27 average and 5.5 percentage points above the target set but the Council Recommendation on VET.

In terms of providing work-based learning experiences to its recent IVET graduates, Denmark is performing well, scoring 78.8% in 2024, 13,5 percentage points above the EU-27 average and 18.8 percentage points above the target set by the Council Recommendation on VET.

The country appears to stabilise the percentage of early school leavers, which stood at 10.4 percentage points in 2024 (same rate as in 2023), a score which is 1.1 percentage points above the EU-27 average and 1.4 points above the target set by the [Council Resolution on the European Education Area](#).

The NEET rate has been further decreased in 2024 (by 0.6 percentage points since 2023) standing at 8%, 3 percentage points below the EU-27 average and 1 percentage points below the target set by the European pillar of social rights action plan.

The country is performing well in terms of the digital skills of its adult population (16-74-year-olds), scoring 69.6% in 2024, just 0.4 percentage point below the target set for 2025 by the [Skills Agenda](#) and 14 percentage points above the EU-27 average.

Denmark can be optimistic in reaching the target set for 2030 by the [European pillar of social rights action plan](#) regarding the participation of adults in lifelong learning as it scored 47.1% in 2022 (latest available data), 7.6 percentage points above the EU-27 average.

**Table 1. European vocational education and training policy dashboard: Denmark**

Type of indicator <sup>(6)</sup>	Indicator	Last available year	DK	EU-27	Policy Document	EU target (year)
<b>VET for developing a lifelong learning culture</b>						
Progress	Adults (25-64 year-olds) with a learning experience in the last 12 months (%) <sup>*</sup>	2022	47.1	39.5	Skills Agenda	50% (2025)
					Council Resolution on EEA	47% (2025)
					ESPR Action Plan	60% (2030)
Progress	Low-qualified adults with a learning experience in the last 12 months (%) <sup>(*)</sup>	2022	25.3 <sup>u</sup>	18.4	Skills Agenda	30% (2025)
Progress	Unemployed adults with a learning experience in the last 4 weeks (%)	2024	35.9	15.3	Skills Agenda	20% (2025)
Context	Employment rate for 20-64 year-olds (%)	2024	80.2	75.8	ESPR Action Plan	78% (2030)
Context	Early leavers from education and training (%)	2024	10.4	9.3	Council Resolution on EEA	<9% (2030)
Context	NEET rate for 15-29 year-olds (%)	2024	8	11.0	ESPR Action Plan	9% (2030)
<b>VET for Resilience, transitions, sustainability and excellence</b>						
Progress	Adults (16-74 year-olds) with at least basic digital skills (%)	2023	69.6	55.6	Skills Agenda	70% (2025)
					ESPR Action Plan	80% (2030)
Progress	Employment rate for recent IVET graduates (20-34 year-olds) (%)	2024	87.7	80.0	Council Rec on VET	82% (2025)
Progress	Recent IVET graduates (20-34 year-olds) with a work-based learning experience as part of their vocational education and training (%)	2024	78.8	65.3	Council Rec on VET	60% (2025)
					Council Resolution on EEA	
Context	25-34 year-olds with tertiary attainment (%)	2024	51.2	44.2	Council Resolution on EEA	45% (2025)
Context	Gender employment gap (%)	2024	6.5	10.0	ESPR Action Plan	To be halved (2030)
Context	People at risk of poverty or social exclusion (1000s)	2024	1065	93 333	ESPR Action Plan	15 million decrease (2030)
Context	Employed ICT specialists (1000s)	2024	177.2	10273.6 <sup>e</sup>	2030 Digital Compass	20 million, with convergence between men and women (2030)
<b>VET for the European Education Area</b>						
Progress	Learners in IVET who benefited from a learning mobility abroad (%) <sup>**</sup>	2021	3.6	2.1 <sup>dv</sup>	Council Rec on VET	8% (2025)
					Skills Agenda	
					Council Rec Europe on the Move	12% (2030)
Context	Average number of foreign languages learned in IVET	2023	0.1	1.2 <sup>d</sup>		

Available flags: d – definition differs, u – low reliability, v – Cedefop estimate.

<sup>\*</sup>Eurostat data (Adult Education Survey, special calculation excluding guided on-the-job training).

<sup>\*\*</sup> Provisional estimates affected by the Covid19 pandemic.

Source: Cedefop. (n.d.). [European VET policy dashboard](#).

<sup>(6)</sup> Definitions on the type of indicators are available at <https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/tools/european-vet-policy-dashboard/methodology>.

## 6. Conclusion

Denmark continues to make progress in its VET priorities, further solidifying these efforts through significant policy developments in 2023 and 2024 and accompanying funding.

Regarding increasing participation, the [EUD 8/9 pilot programme](#), a continuation of previous experiments, was expanded to allow all municipalities to offer it in 2023, with dedicated funding secured for 2024 and 2025, and further extended through an application round in 2024 until the 2025/26 school year. Furthermore, the successful [role models](#) initiative was operational in 2023 and in June 2024 the measure's sustainability over time was ensured. The [Tripartite agreement to increase apprenticeships](#) continues to be implemented and an evaluation is planned for 2025 to examine possible funding reallocation. The [tripartite agreement for increasing apprentices in the healthcare sector](#) gained a new impetus in 2024 in the context of the overall [education reform](#). Denmark plans to completely change its upper secondary VET landscape in 2030 forecasting 10 000 more enrolments per year (ReferNet Denmark & Cedefop, 2024a). Active labour market policies like the [regional education fund](#) and the [Job-VEU-Model](#) also contribute to an increased VET participation. However, Denmark could benefit in the short term by introducing internships of maximum two weeks in the last grade of lower secondary education for all learners (Reform Commission, 2022) and by improving guidance services on the types of VET programmes offered at upper secondary level (OECD, 2024).

In terms of increasing education attainment, a major political agreement in November 2023 strengthened the [FGU framework](#) and ensured its financial stability, subsequently implemented by a 2024 Act introducing new measures like a bridging course and assessment for 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> graders. Moreover, the [tripartite agreement on adult and continuing education](#) was incorporated into legislation by January 2024. In addition, Denmark plans to invest substantial funds for training vulnerable groups in 2026 (European Commission, 2024). Denmark could benefit by introducing second chance schemes that would help especially the integration of second-generation migrants but also NEETs in general (OECD, 2024).

Adapting VET for the green and digital transitions saw substantial progress in 2024 with the [Prepared for the future IV agreement](#), allocating significant funds for green equipment upgrades and integrating green transition into standards and curricula. Concurrently, the knowledge centre for Agriculture was established in 2024, building on late 2023 funding, and the sustainability over time of [knowledge centres for VET](#) was secured from 2025 through a June 2024 agreement. The appointment of [Climate VET centres](#) in 2024 is another step towards preparing VET for the twin transition. [Education efforts for the green transition](#) continued by securing funding for VET providers to upgrade equipment and test and develop training programmes. Active labour market policies like the [education lift](#) support green up/reskilling. Denmark could benefit by enhancing public awareness on the upskilling and reskilling options available, particularly for low-skilled workers (Reform Commission, 2022; OECD, 2024).

Moderate progress has been achieved in attracting and retaining skilled teaching staff. The agreement on primary and lower secondary education contains some initiatives on

training teaching staff. Moreover, the [Prepared for the future IV agreement](#) allocates funds for teacher training in skills needed for the green transition. However, it is too early to evaluate the results of these interventions. Denmark could benefit by allowing practitioners to teach part-time in schools and by relaxing entry qualification requirements for professionals wanting to become VET teachers (OECD, 2024).

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