D.1.2. International Standard Classification of Education

7.49. The purpose of the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED) is to provide an integrated and consistent statistical framework for the collection and reporting of internationally comparable education statistics. The coverage of ISCED 1997 extends to all organized and sustained learning opportunities for children, youth, and adults, including those with special educational needs, irrespective of the institutions or organizations providing them or the form in which they are delivered.

7.50. ISCED is a multipurpose system, designed for education, policy analysis, and decision-making, whatever the structure of the national education systems and whatever the stage of economic development of a country. It can be utilized for statistics on many different aspects of education such as pupil enrolment, human or financial resources invested in education, and educational attainment of the population. The basic concept and definitions of ISCED have therefore been designed to be universally valid and invariant with respect to the particular circumstances of a national education system. However, it is necessary for a general system to include definitions and instructions that cover the full range of education systems.

7.51. For instance, an employed person, when answering a question on highest completed level of general education at school, will base his or her response on the national classification system. Since education systems differ across countries, there is no unambiguous definition of general school education. Therefore, so that the goal of providing internationally comparable data can be achieved, as a first step, countries should use their own classification system and in a second step, where possible, a correspondence should be made with the internationally accepted International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED 1997).

7.52. ISCED 1997 identifies the following seven levels of education:

- **Level 0**: Preprimary education (provides a bridge between the home and a school-based atmosphere)
- **Level 1**: Primary education or first stage of basic education (offers a sound basic education in reading, writing, and mathematics along with an elementary understanding of other subjects)
- **Level 2**: Lower secondary or second stage of basic education (completes the provision of basic education which began at ISCED 1)
- **Level 3**: (Upper) secondary education (begins at the end of full-time compulsory education)
- **Level 4**: Postsecondary nontertiary education (captures programmes that straddle the boundary between upper secondary and postsecondary education)
- **Level 5**: First stage of tertiary education (consists of tertiary programmes having an educational content more advanced than that offered at levels 3 and 4)
- **Level 6**: Second stage of tertiary education, leading to an advanced research qualification (reserved for tertiary programmes that lead to the award of an advanced research qualification)

7.53. The case study provided in Box VII.11 describes the relationship between jobs held and education requirements in tourism industries.

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**Box VII.11**

**Education levels: example of Canada**

As often noted in the literature on tourism employment, many jobs in tourism are associated with relatively low skill and education requirements. This generalization is supported by data for Canada on persons working in tourism industries. The data showed that most tourism workers in Canada have relatively low education levels compared with Canadian workers in general. Only about 1 in 10 tourism workers (12.3 percent) hold a university certificate or degree compared with 22.3 percent of persons employed in the overall workforce. Further, 23.3 percent of tourism workers have no certificate, diploma or degree compared with 14.5 percent in Canada’s overall workforce.

However, at the industry group level within the tourism sector in Canada, the generalization about low education levels of tourism workers is not sustained. Indeed, the data on the demography of the workers in Canada’s tourism industries reveal considerable variability in the education levels of workers across tourism industry groups. Thus, in both the recreation and entertainment industry and travel services industry groups, the share of tourism workers with a university certificate or degree (22.7 percent) is approximately the same as that found in the overall Canada’s workforce. On the other hand, the shares of workers in the food and beverages, accommodation, and transportation industry groups with a university certificate or degree (7.2 percent, 11.8 percent, and 11.9 percent) are much lower than those of persons employed in the overall workforce. Similarly, the share of workers in the food and beverage, and accommodation industry groups with no certificate, diploma or degree (31.9 percent and 20.6 percent) are much higher than those of person employed in the overall workforce.

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