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# THE VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AS AN OPPORTUNITY FOR CAREER DEVELOPMENT LA EDUCACIÓN VOCACIONAL COMO OPORTUNIDAD DE DESARROLLO PROFESIONAL

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#### **Abstract**

The various structural changes in the economy at the beginning of the transition to a market economy adversely affected the definition of vocational training needs and the reduced financial resources for the development of education led to a decrease in the educational and vocational qualification level of the workforce. This has led to the introduction of a number of European educational standards adapted to our national qualifications structures in recent years, providing opportunities for personal development and improving the quality of life.

## Keywords

Education - Education - Vocational education - Staff - Competitiveness

#### Resumen

Los diversos cambios estructurales en la economía al comienzo de la transición a una economía de mercado afectaron adversamente la definición de necesidades de formación profesional y la reducción de los recursos financieros para el desarrollo de la educación condujo a una disminución en el nivel de educación y calificación profesional de la fuerza de trabajo. Esto ha llevado a la introducción de una serie de estándares educativos europeos adaptados a nuestras estructuras nacionales de cualificaciones en los últimos años, proporcionando oportunidades para el desarrollo personal y la calidad de vida.

# **Palabras Claves**

Educación – Educación – Formación profesional – Personal – Competitividad

The launching of the pan-European project for economic and social development and the Lisbon Strategy posed a number of challenges to the prosperity of the Member States of the European Union, and the vocational education and training is a prerequisite for providing a mobile and well-qualified workforce with the opportunity to actively involved in entrepreneurial activity. That is why the attention of the different institutions has focused on its updating and modernization. Enabling this task in Bulgaria is particularly necessary, but at the same time the processes in the economic space and the lack of an innovative strategy do not stimulate the development of the urgent changes related to vocational education and training.

The vocational training should prepare the students for inclusion in public production by creating optimal conditions for personality development in different types of learning and work activities, promoting the development of such qualities as the creative thinking and the entrepreneurship.

The technological learning is at the core of the vocational education, and it is the task of learners to master the technology of the industrial, agricultural and servicing labor, available for study through general education, in order to achieve the goals, which are:

- acquiring technological knowledge based on a working culture, consistent with the studied technologies in the production of articles for own needs and for the society;
- mastering the general and special skills required to search for and use information, designing and creating work products, organizing the home economy, independently drawing up their own life and professional plans, creating safe working conditions;
- development of cognitive interest, technical thinking, intellectual, creative, communicative and organizational abilities;
- educating hard work, economy, accuracy, purposefulness, entrepreneurship, responsibility for the results of their activities;
- positive attitude towards people and the results of their work;
- application of polytechnical and technological knowledge and skills in an independent practice <sup>1</sup>.

In addition, the UNESCO documents set out the tasks of general education in the 21st century that are inextricably linked with the technological and vocational training, according to which young people should learn:

- learn (learn to learn);
- to create (to be able to apply their knowledge in practice);
- to live (to be able to apply the technologies at home, to lead a healthy lifestyle);

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Natsionalen plan za razvitie na Republika Bulgaria za perioda 2007-2013, Sofia.

• to live together (to have the necessary culture in their human relations, to respect with respect to the elderly, to their peers, to the people of other nationalities and religions)<sup>2</sup>.

In practice, there are no established procedures or rules, or methodology for determining the actual needs of vocational training and subsequently taking the necessary measures to organize and carry out the necessary vocational training. To a certain extent, the vocational training needs can be proved through:

- systematically analyzing the labor market;
- systematic study and analysis of the skills needs;
- supporting the process of developing and permanently updating professional standards;
- supporting the process of developing and permanently updating educational standards;
- supporting the process of developing and permanently updating education programs;
- developing new and updating the old curricula;
- development of training modules and others<sup>3</sup>.

Not least are the problems that make it difficult for the management teams of the vocational schools to carry out good and complete vocational training. Some of the problems are that:

- there are no targeted and systematic surveys and forecasts on the current and the future labor market needs in a regional aspect;
- the lack of an objective view of the requirements and the changes that occur in the real work environment, makes it difficult to carry out the practical training;
- lack of innovative thinking and innovative learning activities:
- the link between vocational training institutions as training institutions and employers is been disturbed, which hinders the formation of modern professional skills<sup>4</sup>.

In order to create an appropriate learning environment for professional education, the material base requires modernization. Shortage of funds is a difficult problem, despite the efforts of the vocational schools to look for ways to overcome them - participations in projects, realization of own revenues and others. Following our accession to the European

<sup>4</sup> Natsionalen plan za razvitie na Republika Bulgaria....

PH. D. AKULINA ANDREEVA STEFANOVA / PH. D. DENITSA STOYCHEVA BOGDANSKA / PH. D. © VASILISA KARAKOVA

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> J. Delore, Obrazovanieto – skrito sukrovishte. UNESCO. Sofia. 1998.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> Natsionalen plan za razvitie na Republika Bulgaria...

Union, our participation in international projects and programs is one of the most reliable sources of resources for the development of the facilities and the training of the trainees.

The investment on its own material and technical base can be defined as an important strategic goal. In the event of a delay in the realization of this objective, it is possible to develop the use of the facilities of companies through a contractual relationship as a positive development. Ensuring tha learning to be completed in a real production environment is been stopped by the underdeveloped links of the school with the business, in line with the modern economic relations. There are insufficient mechanisms developed to encourage active participation of the employers in the practical training of the participants in the vocational education<sup>5</sup>.

The Brussels Communiqué puts a major emphasis on the cooperation between the educational institutions and the business towards achieving the highest possible human resource outcomes. That is why the pursuit of vocational training through various innovative activities is being increasingly developed as a cost-effective investment to transform the human resources through different innovation activities into the real capital of the nation.

With the development of the science and the technology, new challenges for education are emerging - the need for qualified professionals with competences in more than one professional area. Such traditional education in its present form could not provide, as it was built on the paradigm - education for the whole life. It has been shown that many of the knowledge acquired in the formal education system is inapplicable at the end of the training. This is why an educational paradigm of a new type, based on lifelong learning, is needed to meet the new needs for continuing to maintain the acquired qualification (refreshing the acquired knowledge and skills in the specialty), enhancing the qualification (acquiring knowledge and skills in the completed professional field, but at a higher level of complexity) and for retraining when it is needed (acquiring knowledge and skills for carrying out a new professional activity)<sup>6</sup>.

Lifelong learning is considered by the society as one of the most important factors for developing and improving professional realization and promoting the active participation of the citizens in the economic life. It is seen as a process of learning and acquiring knowledge and skills through formal and non-formal learning and independent learning throughout human life. Lifelong learning is imposed by modern educational needs of society. The European Commission considers the continuous education and the lifelong learning as a means of:

- the creation of highly qualified specialists with knowledge in different fields;
- enhancing the competitiveness of the European economy and shaping citizens with European self-awareness<sup>7</sup>.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> Produlzhavashtoto obrazovanie I obuchenie – sustoyanie I perspektivi. Sbornik nauchni studii, Universitetsko izdatelstvo "Neophit Rilski",Blagoevgrad. 2008.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> Stefanova, Ак.Подготовка кадров на основе продолжающего профессионального образования и обучения - организация, оценка и удостоверение, Всероссийская научнопрактическая конференция "Подготовка кадров для инновационной экономики", Россия, Кемерово. 2009.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> Memorandum za neprekusnato obrazovanie, (2000) European commission of Education, Brussels.

The perceived need for a constant self-improvement as well as the ability to maintain up-to-date knowledge and skills that meet labor market requirements are some of the major factors driving people not to stop learning. It is assumed that the constant self-improvement of an individual not only increases his knowledge and skills in a given field, but also helps to increase his competitive ability in the labor market. Not least, through the lifelong learning, one enriches his knowledge of the world and extends horizons of his spiritual development, and the continuing vocational training providers face the growing demands of reacting to rapid changes, to use new technologies, to be more flexible and more efficient, to respond to the needs of the interested users, to learn from others and to be visible and competitive in the market of educational services<sup>8</sup>.

The concept of the European Commission Memorandum on Lifelong Learning has the idea that it is never too early or too late to learn <sup>9</sup>.

The perception of such an idea is related to the affirmation of the attitude that one must constantly be open to new ideas, making non-standard solutions, acquiring new skills, and adopting new behaviors. The lifelong learning implies finding opportunities for people to be trained in a variety of conditions: at work, at home, on holidays, i.e. outside the formal standard learning places such as schools and universities. This type of learning often involves distance learning, internet learning, self-learning at home. When there is a legal basis encouraging people to become qualified and cultivated, then our education will come close to a number of European education systems that are based on targeted funding for lifelong learning and education, the lifelong learning paradigm, and the linking of learning outcomes activity with the professional development and realization of the personality<sup>10</sup>.

There are a number of institutions at a national, regional and local level that define, manage, coordinate and control, i.e. participate actively in the management of the vocational education and training. Of all these, the development of the vocational education and training in Bulgaria depends to a greater or lesser extent. All of them, together with the users of the professionally trained staff, are involved in managing this educational process so important for each country, where the Bulgarian education needs to prepare individuals ready for the accelerated development of the technological environment through systematic and global thinking with an innovative style of action, able to achieve high results in translation activities in the conditions of freedom of choice, competition and scarce resources. The education should be directed to studying new technology, to the acquisition of scientific and technical knowledge, the necessary knowledge and competencies must meet the requirements of the 21st century and the level of development of the human personality. At the same time, the education should build the trainees' value system, tailored to their individuality, aiming at preparing them for real living conditions, encouraging and stepping up the entrepreneurship among the young people for normal engagement in the work, and the professionalism and the professional experience to ensure a high competitiveness and a labor market mobility<sup>11</sup>.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup> Lisabonska strategia . Lisbonne. 2000.

 <sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup> Memorandum za neprekusnato obrazovanie, European commission of Education, Brussels. 2000.
 <sup>10</sup> Produlzhavashtoto obrazovanie I obuchenie – sustoyanie I perspektivi (2008) Sbornik nauchni

studii, Universitetsko izdatelstvo "Neophit Rilski",Blagoevgrad.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>11</sup> Stefanova, Ak. Vocational teaching in tourism with regards to some problems of instruction of highlyqualified cadres, Fourth International BiennialCongress HOTELPLAN, Belgrad, Serbia. 2010.

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