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Vocationalisation of School Education in the Republic of Macedonia

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Overview

Educational System of Republic of Macedonia consists of: Pre school education, primary education, secondary education, high education, master studies, Ph studies, education of adults, education for children with specific needs

Basic information for secondary vocational education

After completing elementary school, pupils are entitled to the right to enrol in any secondary school under equal criteria. This right is especially exercised by young people from urban areas, thus around 85% of the pupils after the compulsory education immediately enrol in some form of secondary education. The Secondary Education is not compulsory. Pupils attend the secondary education free of charge.

In the Republic of Macedonia, the secondary vocational education that lasts for three and four years is conducted in fifteen broader areas of labour, and includes 170 educational profiles (80 of four-year duration and 90 of three-year duration).

As for the teaching curricula that are realised according to the PHARE Programme, it is envisaged that program subject matters are distributed in six subjects of general education, which are common and obligatory for all the vocations, i.e. for all the labour areas: Macedonian Language and Literature with Communications, Foreign Language, Business, Computer Science, History and History of Macedonia. On a level of each separate vocation (labour area) there exist utmost three obligatory general education subjects more per vocation, which are in function of the respective vocation, as well as compulsory common-vocational subjects. The teaching curricula for the common-vocational subjects represent a broad vocational and theoretic basis for the rules that govern the working process, which enables conscientious and rational acceptance of the working procedures. The structural model of the teaching curricula and syllabi that has been worked out for the needs of the PHARE Programme is also taken as a basis (with negligible modifications) for the alterations pending in the other types of secondary education. Same is the case with the secondary art education, and with the three-year long secondary education in which the realisation of the GTZ project is in process (it is a project for improvement of the secondary vocational education for the technical vocations).

Types of vocational programmes at the school level

The secondary vocational education continues after the elementary education and is based above all on acquiring knowledge, skills and routines from the sciences that are of practical value. The basic function of the secondary vocational education is pupils' training for work, but also for continuation of the education. It ends with final or specialist examination.

According to the mentioned Concept, starting with the school year 2006/2007, the four-year secondary vocational education will end with State Matriculation Examination or with School Final Examination. The State Final Examination (Matura) enables an entrance in the higher education, while the School Final Examination provides entrance at the labour market.

The three-year vocational training ends with a final examination that enables entrance in the labour market as well as continuation of the education (under special conditions) in four-year vocational or specialist education.

The four-year and three-year vocational training prepares pupils for wide area of vocation within the frames of different occupations. The vocational training of duration up to two years provides qualifications for simple jobs and profiles and the specialist education refines knowledge and skills which are necessary for jobs in which special technologies are employed.

Upon finishing the vocational training, pupils undergo examination on vocational proficiency that enables employment or continuation of the education (under special circumstances) in the three-year secondary vocational education. After completing the specialist education, the candidates can be employed or continue their education in the Higher Vocational Education.

As a consequence of the reforms that have started in the secondary vocational education, the Law on Vocational Education and Training is in procedure, which regulates the levels of qualification that students acquire in the vocational education and training in a separate section. There will be five degrees, i.e. four levels of qualifications that the students will acquire in this kind of secondary education. The First and second degree for acquiring vocational competence. Persons who have completed primary education can also enrol for this level. Persons who have not completed primary education can also enrol, but are obliged to complete the primary education while acquiring the vocational competence. The third degree is for acquiring a vocation and secondary vocational education. Persons who have completed primary education can enrol in this course. The fourth degree is for acquiring a vocation and secondary vocational education. Persons who have completed the third degree can enrol. The fifth degree is for acquiring vocational specialist education. Persons who have completed the third and fourth degrees of the corresponding vocation can enrol.

The student who has completed the first degree can continue his/her education in the second degree, and the student who has completed the second degree can continue his/her education in the third degree, providing educational continuity between the levels I, II and III. The first and second degrees correspond to level I, the third degree corresponds to level II, and the fourth degree corresponds to level III.

After the completion of the secondary education, because of his/her personal needs or the needs of their employer, the persons could further extend their knowledge and skills or acquire new ones by training, re-training or additional training. If the persons continue their further secondary education at a secondary school, they receive a public document recognised by the state. If they continue their secondary education at another institution they receive a document, but it is not verified by the state.

Students do not receive public documents verified by the state for studies such as work experience, in-service training, and self-education.

In order to overcome these deficiencies in connecting the systems of the formal and the informal education, the preparation of the Law on Informal Education and Adult Education is in progress.

The law also anticipates the establishment of a National Council for Vocational Education and Training, which will propose a list of occupations for vocational education to the Ministry of Education and Science and will propose state qualifications and standards and vocations. In cooperation with the municipalities it will also submit proposal for development of the network of the vocational education and training.

The educational profiles are grouped in twenty six vocations these include agriculture, veterinary, nutrition, forestry, carpentry, geology, mining, metallurgy, mechanical engineering, electrical engineering, chemistry and technology, textile, leather, graphics design, personal services, geodesy, civil engineering, traffic, trade, catering and tourism, economy, law, bureau, technical, arts, healthcare and physical culture. Within the frames of the vocational education there are around 260 educational profiles, including 80 educational profiles for four-year education; 90 educational profiles for three-year education; 50 educational profiles for two-year education; and 40 educational profiles for specialist education.

Reforms in Republic of Macedonia for improve vocational education

Within the frames of the secondary education, the changes in the high-school education and in the secondary vocational education in the Republic of Macedonia are directed towards increasing the quality of education and towards the needs of the labour market. The most important segments of the changes that are going to take place represent the new teaching syllabi and curricula, by which the students are given greater opportunity to elect subjects that they are going to study. Thus, the numbers of high-school and secondary vocational school students will be equalized. In accordance with the programme and process changes in the high-schools and in the 4-year secondary education, new matriculation and final examinations are introduced in the secondary education. The successful implementing and executing of these examinations will largely improve the quality of the secondary education and will ease the entrance into the higher education.

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In order to overcome these deficiencies in connecting the systems of the formal and the informal education, the preparation of the Law on Informal Education and Adult Education is in procedure. This Law will develop a certification system and a system for training, evaluation, criteria for accreditation of institutions for informal education and training, and other relevant issues with regard to the informal education.

Currently, the informal education is carried out by the workers' universities, the employment centres, the educational centres of the trade companies, etc. The workers' universities with their programmes educate large number of trainees, most of which attend foreign languages courses, computer courses, courses for hairdressers, courses of cosmetics, preparatory courses for enrolment at secondary vocational schools and tertiary education institutions, sewing courses and for tailors, catering, radio and television mechanics and other occupations. The trainees of these centres get certificates that are not publicly verified by the state.

Serious obstacle for the adequate response of the educational system with regard to providing the students with the skills needed is the insufficient scope of training the teachers for instruction, oriented towards acquiring competences, as well as there is lack of the equipment needed for computers, laboratories, and workshops. There are no formal ways in which the Employment Agency could convey their information on the skills that the employers point as lacking ones to the policy creators and to the schools. The employers are also insufficiently interested to be included not only in the drafting of the curricula, but also in the conducting of the on-the-job training and the on-the-job examinations. It is probably due to the excess of labour force and also because of the high percentage of unemployed workforce.

The main objective of the reformed secondary vocational education and training was creation of personnel with professional knowledge, and above all, skills and competences appropriate to the modern needs and the dynamic labour market. In order to achieve this objective, program documents have been prepared, as are the General State Curriculum and Curricula Standards on: vocation or groups of vocations, educational profile, school, subject of instruction and teaching hour.

In accordance with the General State Curriculum, the secondary vocational education and training enables the student to gain universal capabilities and vocational competences that are needed at the labour market, as well as to continue the education in the institutions of higher education.

Consequently, the reformed secondary vocational training of the educational profiles with education that lasts four years, enables the student, according to his/her own preferences and interests, to choose between undergoing a vocational final examination or a general matriculation examination. In the present period, the realisation of the VET 3 financed by CARDS is in progress, in the frames of which the following activities should be realized i.e. establishment of an institution (Vocational Education and Training Centre) for support and development of the vocational training; teacher training; training of principals of the educational institutions. Thus, in the secondary vocational education and training, the following profiles have been reformed; 22 educational profiles of 11 vocations or groups of vocations that are present in 52 schools; 8 educational profiles of 3 vocations for students with special educational needs that are present in 4 schools.

In the school year 2004/2005, 56 schools have been included in the reformed secondary vocational education and training.

The goal of the project is to qualify the students of the secondary vocational education that lasts three years, in accordance with the needs of the structural changes in the economy of the Republic of Macedonia and to adjust the secondary vocational education to the altered economic conditions.

The project envisages accomplishment of the following results improvement of the conditions for the vocational and the practical education in the pilot schools; appropriate qualification of the teaching staff, especially the teachers of the vocational subjects; realisation of the vocational education and of the practicum in accordance with the requirements of the labour market; development of a unique system of vocational education and training, relevant to the needs of the labour market etc.

The phare/cards Programs contribute to the development of the vocational training with regard to lifelong learning, especially by stimulating the continuing education, the teacher training and the implementation of the National Qualification Framework for Vocational Education. Around six hundred teachers from the vocational schools, as well as representatives of the social partners (Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, the Ministry of Economy, the Commercial Chamber of the Republic of Macedonia, The Education, Science and Culture Union) and representatives of the employers (the Commercial Bank – Skopje, Fershpel – Skopje, Health Care Centre – Bitola, Clinical Centre – Skopje, KNAUF – Gostivar etc.) have been included in the training

In relation to the legislation, bringing of the Law on Secondary Vocational Education is in its final phase (expected to be brought during 2005), the main goal of which is the secondary vocational education and training is to prepare a labour force for the needs of the labour market on one side and continuation of the education on the other. By virtue of this Law, forming of National Council for the Secondary Vocational Education is proposed, the competence of which is to propose the Ministry of Education and Training a list of vocations for vocational education as well as training corresponding to the demands of the labour market; to elaborate state qualifications and standards according to professions, to implement them for the needs of the labour market, and to participate in the state strategy on vocational education and training.

The basis of the vocational education and training in the Republic of Macedonia is composed of three- to four-year programmes, as well as of two-year specialised education and training programmes. The objectives, the tasks and the curricula of the respective types of vocational education and training are determined by conceptual and programme documents.

The vocational education and training is developed and regulated by the state on a school-based principle in all spheres of interest. Thus, on the basis of the four-year programmes, the students are simultaneously trained for immediate employment in different areas of the labour market (economics, law, administration, trade, catering, tourism, healthcare, agriculture, electrical engineering, etc.), as well as for further education. Within these curricula (with minor exceptions) both the theoretical and the practical instruction are provided in schools. Within the three-year programmes, the students are offered career-related courses of study. Thereby, students get practical training at in-school settings, as well as at work-sites in the respective companies. The specialised training provides upgraded technology-related knowledge and skills (technological specialisation), as well as at organising and managing the working process (supervisor specialisation) with regard to the educational profile. The two-year vocational training that is provided in schools and workers' universities is aiming to prepare students for simpler work tasks in the manufacturing business, services and administration.

In order to adjust the system of vocational education and training to the social and economic changes and the workforce development, the Republic of Macedonia has opted for its gradual transformation.

The vocational education and training in the Republic of Macedonia is carried out in educational institutions which have insufficient cooperation with general education institutions. This is mainly due to the considerable difference in the syllabi and curricula of these two streams of education and the lack of a modular programming system. The forthcoming reforms of the syllabi of the four-year educational profile will be directed at establishing closer cooperation between the vocational and general streams. The integration of vocational education into mainstream education will be enabled via the introduction of new courses on general knowledge that would lead to broadening the courses spectrum, comparable to the general education courses. On the other hand, more elective and optional courses in the field of technical and vocational education will be offered in the general education.