

VOCATIONAL EDUCATION IN PODKARPACKIE PROVINCE – LEGAL BASIS AND PROSPECTS

EDUCAȚIA PROFESIONALĂ ÎN PROVINCIA PODKARPACKIE - BAZĂ LEGALĂ ȘI PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract. After the period of political transformation in 1990-s, the system of vocational education broke in Poland. This process also touched Podkarpacie Voivodeship. The experience of recent years distinctly justifies the urgent need to undertake activities in order to restore a proper level of vocational education in our region. This goal can be successfully reached only through the intensification of cooperation of local self-government units, employers and vocational schools in this field. Each of these subjects possesses without which it is impossible to prepare young people for constantly changing labour market needs. Improvement of the existing state of affairs in the field of vocational education is possible through the intensification of the dual system which has not been promoted well enough in Poland so far. The essence of this system is based on learning a profession organized by an employer and theoretical studying performed in a school system or in extracurricular forms. Only the development of the dual system gives the opportunity for a graduate to find a job at the employer's where he was trained.

Rezumat. După perioada de transformare politică din anii 1990, sistemul de învățământ profesional s-a deteriorat în Polonia. Acest proces a atins de asemenea Voievodatul Podkarpackie. Experiența din ultimii ani justifică în mod distinct necesitatea urgentă de a întreprinde activități pentru a restabili un nivel corespunzător al învățământului profesional în regiunea noastră. Acest obiectiv poate fi obținut cu succes numai prin intensificarea cooperării dintre unitățile autoguvernării locale, angajatori și școlile profesionale din acest domeniu. Fiecare dintre aceste subiecte posedă atuuri fără de care este imposibil să se pregătească tinerii pentru nevoile pieței forței de muncă în continuă schimbare. Îmbunătățirea stării existente în domeniul educației vocaționale este posibilă prin intensificarea sistemului dual, care până acum nu a fost suficient de bine promovat în Polonia. Esența acestui sistem se bazează pe învățarea unei profesii organizate de un angajator și a studiilor teoretice efectuate într-un sistem școlar sau în forme extrașcolare. Numai dezvoltarea sistemului dual oferă absolvenților oportunitatea de a-și găsi un loc de muncă la angajatorul unde au fost instruiți.

Key words: educational systems, vocational training, profession, dual system, qualifications.

Cuvinte cheie: sisteme educaționale, formare profesională, profesie, sistem dual, calificări.

Continuous changes of the economic situation in the country and Podkarpackie province should take place simultaneously with a dynamic change of the vocational education system. The need of contemporary times is to adapt vocational education to the needs of the labour market [4 - p.72]. This is a process which is in contradiction with the vocational education system in planned economy [6 - p.4]¹, which Poland said goodbye to after 1990. Also, lower quality of education in vocational schools [6 - p.5] led to the end of vocational education that was typical of centrally planned economy. This low

¹ Its basic feature was to educate working classes that did not have to speak foreign languages and was not able to adapt to the needs of the labour market in which companies needing graduates of vocational schools closed down. This has been augmented by the process of diminishing agriculture and concentration of capital in big urban areas.

quality also did not allow for adapting to quick changes in the labour market in a free-market economy. Since graduates of vocational schools did not acquire basic skills, they could not continue their education in their further lives [6 - p.6]. One cannot doubt that evolution and the development of vocational education become a certain tool for the development of economy. To undertake actions, which will lead to the development of this special kind of education, one should diagnose weaknesses of the existing system of vocational education. Undoubtedly, the weakness of the existing system of vocational education in Poland results from the shortage of professional personnel, especially from the shortage of teachers of trades that are needed on the market [6 - p.7]. An essential element which indicates that evaluation of the existing system of vocational education in Poland must be negative is the lack of appropriate facilities. Additionally, we should emphasise the weakness of existing mechanisms in Poland, which would encourage employers to provide schools with modern technologies [6 - p.7].

The basic legal act on the system of education including vocational education is the Act of 7 September 1991 on the system of education [1]. The law says that schools offering trade education can be established and managed by self-governing units, natural persons, legal persons, and an appropriate minister. The establishing and running of vocational schools, with the exception of superregional schools and institutions, belong to the tasks and responsibilities of a county, whose organs should be aware that the objective of vocational education is teaching trades with the use of new technological solutions to foster the development of key competencies of students. To achieve it, it is necessary to employ specialists in a given trade, develop modern technical-didactic facilities, constantly adapt to the demands of the labour market as well as to continually train teachers.

In vocational education the key aspect is to teach a trade [4 - p.78]² so that the student will be practically prepared to work efficiently in production, trade and service processes [6 - p.5]. Practical classes can take place in continuing education institutions, practical training institutions, school workshops, companies, and even on a farm. To teach a trade practically, we should have both the teaching staff of theoretical subjects and as well as teachers providing practical preparation for a given trade. However, the weakness of vocational education is a high unit cost of educating a student. In Podkarpackie province the system of vocational education has not been too well developed. According to the data provided by the Educational Information System there are 127 school complexes here, which provide vocational education [8 - p.5]³. A solution

² A trade is very important in shaping the personality of a man as it creates authority, increases the feeling of responsibility, creates business ethics.

³ This number does not include post-secondary schools. Vocational schools in Podkarpackie province are run by: 21 counties, 4 district self-governments holding the rights of a county, 3 district self-governments, which run school complexes, 2 school complexes are run by the Ministry of Agriculture, 1 school complex is run by the chamber of crafts and Small and Mid-Sized Entrepreneurship. 5 school complexes are run by associations and foundations, 1

to many problems of the vocational education system, including the system in Podkarpackie province, would be to intensify a dual system, also permissible in Poland, which has not been sufficiently promoted and demonstrated. It provides education organised by an employer and theoretical and general education provided in the school system or in non-school institutions. The dual system gives a graduate an opportunity to find a job at an employer's company, where the graduate underwent training. Practical teaching of a trade is combined with the provision of a contract of employment for a student.

The German system is the best example of the dual educational system [5], in which 3-year education in school and at a company was introduced – a system in which a student can choose their trade. In the German dual system the following institutions are involved: the ministry of education⁴, chambers of commerce and industry, chambers of crafts⁵, employers and students. A visible result of the dual system is the decrease in unemployment among the youth. Within the dual system, a specified trade is taught [5]⁶. The teaching takes place at an employer's company or at a craftsman's and the student is hired on the basis of a contract of employment [7 - p.3]⁷ and receives a salary. The theoretical teaching is organised in schools and the whole programme ends with obtaining formal qualifications. Thus, the assumption of the dual system is to provide a student with theoretical knowledge and access to the labour market. For the dual system to work efficiently, we need to perform certain tasks. It means that for each trade a curriculum has to be devised. I should include a division of subjects into theoretical and practical ones with a certain number of hours assigned to each of them. In Germany the apprenticeship lasts for 3 years, and classes take place at least three days in a week. A trainee has to work a certain definite number of hours in all departments of the company. Only this results in acquiring specific skills and knowledge about principles of running such a company. The apprenticeship follows a certain programme and their quality is constantly monitored. Legal regulations concerning the dual system of education in Germany include the teaching content for 350 trades at the national level [7 - p.11]. Skills and knowledge that a student has to acquire are included in the curriculum, which is the basis for devising individual programme of teaching in particular companies [7 - p.11].

In the German dual system, chambers of commerce and industry play a key role. They create guidelines for programmes in collaboration with companies, prepare and

school complex is run by The Congregation of St. Michael the Archangel and 3 complexes are run by natural persons. These data come from the report drawn up by the Regional Labour Office.

⁴ Its role is to create advantageous legal bases for vocational education.

⁵ They deal with certification in the educational process. It is carried out through devising guidelines of education and programme content in collaboration with a company. Moreover, chambers appoint exam commissions, administer examinations and issue certificates. Chambers know in which companies one can learn a trade and prepare for a job interview.

⁶ The dual system excludes professions of the civil service and some medical professions.

⁷ In Austria, it is a special kind of a contract of employment also called a journeyman contract.

administer examinations, appoint examination commissions and issue certificates [5]. We should emphasise that in Germany the system of dual education gives the possibility of offering education at a college level which is combined with learning a trade and working [5]. Education at this level is aimed at people who already hold a secondary school leaving diploma obtained in vocational school, and after five years can obtain a BSc diploma [5].

The transferring of the dual system of teaching a trade to Poland is not possible directly. However, we can make use of many solutions, adapting them to the needs of our country. Since in Poland county authorities found and supervise schools, they have to take the responsibility of establishing and running schools. For the development of vocational education, support from the province authorities is also important both from self-governing authorities and the supervisory body that is from the local Board of Education. The problem of insufficient development of vocational education in Podkarpackie province has not been solved in spite of the fact that in Poland there are legal regulations on vocational education. The Ministry of National Education came to assistance, issuing the order of 7 February 2012 on the programme basis of teaching trades [3]. This law regulates objectives and tasks of vocational education, learning outcomes and stipulates the conditions of running vocational education programmes for particular trades including minimum number of hours for vocational education.

It has been assumed on the basis of this law that the objective of vocational education is to prepare students to live in conditions of the modern world, perform their jobs, and actively function on the volatile labour market. Therefore, to effectively teach trades on the basis of this law, 8 areas of education were established⁸. However, the issues connected with the practical teaching/ learning trades are regulated by the order of the Ministry of National Education of 15 December 2010 on practical teaching learning trades [2]. This law stipulates the possibilities and conditions of providing apprenticeship in school workshops, continuing education institutions, as well as at companies, and on farms. Also, this law regulates the issue of qualifications that are required from persons that conduct practical training.

§3, passage 2 of this order stipulates that an employer that provides practical training should sign a contract of employment with the trainees. However, if the apprenticeship is done outside school, than the principal of this school should sign a contract on provision of practical training with an employer in whose company the apprenticeship takes place⁹. Such a contract should include the name of the trade which is practically taught, a list of trainees, a form of practical training, and dates of commencement and conclusion. On the basis of this contract, the school is obliged to

⁸ These include the following: administrative and service, electric and electronic, mechanic and mining-metallurgical, agro-forestry with environment protection, tourism and catering, social-medical and artistic areas.

⁹ §7 passage 1 of the order of 15 December 2010 on practical training in a trade.

supervise practical training in a trade and should also approve appointed instructors of practical training in a trade. This contract stipulates responsibilities of the parties that provide apprenticeships. The basic responsibility is to provide material conditions for practical training in a given trade, appoint teachers and instructors and acquaint trainees with the organisation of work in a company. A challenge and a task for county authorities, which found and supervise schools, is to provide financial resources, which allow students to undergo practical training in a trade¹⁰. These resources should be sufficient, among others, to reimburse salaries that employers pay to instructors of practical training¹¹ or to refund the costs of protective clothing necessary for trainees learning a trade.

From the point of view of Podkarpackie Province (Voivodeship) determining priority and desired directions of vocational education seems to be justified. This should be performed taking into account the strategy of the Voivodeship development created by its Marshal. At the same time, while preparing such a document he should mind the specificity of the Voivodeship, further also the district (powiat), its local facilities, e.g. existing or non-existing of potential workplaces giving employment in the region. Special possibilities for the development of vocational education appear on the territories of local self-government where Special Economic Areas exist [10 - p.6]. Of course, following the example of other voivodeships, one may assume that in Podkarpackie Province there can also arise vocational schools educating in such fields as: tourism and gastronomy, construction, information and electronics, mechanics and mechatronics, agriculture and processing, medicine [11]. However, determining connections of a professional branch with the potential and needs of the exact powiat would be ideal¹². It would allow to direct the activities of the conducting authorities and to closely cooperate with such branches of entrepreneurs which will really employ people possessing certain professional skills in the given powiat. Therefore, one should consider whether e.g. Rzeszow Powiat should be satisfied with educating only in the field of the aviation industry [11 - p.34]¹³. Maybe

¹⁰ §9 passage 1 of the order of 15 December 2010 on practical training in a trade.

¹¹ These are: workers for whom didactic and educational work is their basic job and people for whom didactic and educational work is not their basic job. They should hold qualifications required for the post of a teacher, they should hold at least the certificate of a master of a given trade, which they are going to teach. They should also have pedagogical training. See more: § 10 passage 2, 3 and 4 of the order 15 July 2010 on practical training in a trade.

¹² The existing legal regulations give a possibility to study professions not included into the vocational education classification, determining only certain conditions which have to be fulfilled in this substance. Besides the justification of a need to learn a certain profession one should present an opinion of the Voivodeship or Powiat Council of the Labour Market, the authority of a commercial self-government appropriate for the given profession, a proper scientific institution and the Minister adequate for the given profession. For more see art. 86 point 1 b of the Law on the System of Education.

¹³ The development of the aviation branch is a priority in the voivodeship's strategy. The fact, that only in this branch one of the model industrial clusters in Poland has existed, deserves to be underlined. This cluster plays a part of a specific platform for cooperation of entrepreneurs, as well as educational and scientific and research institutions. The Association of the Groups of the Aviation Industry Entrepreneurs "Aviation Valley" led to the arising of the Centre of Operators' Education, uniting schools of a technical profile in Podkarpackie Voivodeship, which trains teachers and creates workshops acting at the schools.

vocational education in Mielec Powiat should be directed similarly. In Sanok Powiat it is worth thinking of intensifying activities for the benefit of developing the education in the automotive branch. Other powiats can reach not only for the current labour market needs, but also consider the validity and analyse a possibility of returning to traditional professions, sometimes particularly connected with the customs of the given self-government unit. For instance, it is worth deliberating over educating in professions connected with wickerworking, beekeeping or a widely comprehended construction branch. Location and development of schools educating certain professions have to be connected not only with the labour market needs but also with the availability of trainers who will be able to prepare for their performing.

Mapping the employment possibilities and needs should not be accidental, it should be entrusted to branch consulting groups [11 - p.16]¹⁴. It means that the effective system of vocational education needs a partnership of self-government authorities with industrial, commercial and craft chambers, so as it is performed in Germany. Unfortunately, the level of this cooperation, or actually its lack, does not instil optimism. One of the reasons of such state of affairs is undoubtedly low common knowledge of the possibilities of existing a dual system of vocational education and real influence on the education and professional training of future employees. Employers have to accept the fact that only their active involvement into the processes of educating future employees can result in introducing professionals possessing real skills and knowledge necessary to easily find themselves in a working place on the labour market.

In order to make mutual contacts between employers and authorities conducting vocational schools easier, as well as extend the knowledge of the youth about vocational education one should do certain work. Leading to cyclic meetings of the headmasters of schools preparing to exercise professions with employers, so as ones could get acquainted with the others' needs is key. Creating the basis of schools interested in directing pupils to practical vocational training is necessary for employers to contact and offer them an opportunity of making internship. In order to get to know the employers' needs and possible places of doing professional training it is necessary to organize mutual fairs and taking up other activities promoting certain cooperation opportunities. It seems to be indisputable that the system of vocational education in Poland will realize its objectives when the education is oriented to the labour market needs [4 - p.83]. And this goal will be reached when a dual system of education, most completely meeting the labour market requirements, becomes widespread. However, the condition of its development is creating an appropriate stimulus for entrepreneurs [6 - p.10], so as to encourage them to involve into the system of vocational education in Poland. In order to diagnose the existing needs in the field of vocational education properly it is necessary to conduct its

¹⁴ Advisory bodies which associate the representatives of business and authorities conducting branch schools.

systematic research. Multiplying the models which function in other voivodeships seems to be purposeful. From the point of view of the labour market needs the research conducted in Malopolskie Voivodeship is getting special significance¹⁵. It aims at analysing the situation of graduates after completing a school and estimating their practical professional preparation and skills. These are only instruments which can serve to determine the directions of vocational education development in Podkarpacie. However, both existing legal regulations and changing needs in this field justify the intensification of activities aimed at developing the system of vocational education based on closer cooperation of the authorities conducting schools with employers and directly with schools¹⁶. Only assuming the intensification of these three subjects' cooperation can really influence advantageous development of vocational education in Podkarpacie. In order to reach positive effects in this scope the symbiosis of the abovementioned subjects is not enough, for their active collaboration is necessary. Each of them have trumps without which it is impossible to prepare young people possessing qualifications adequate for the labour market needs well.

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¹⁵ They bare a name of "The Malopolski Observatory of The Labour Market and Education".

¹⁶ In the professional literature this kind of cooperation is called "knowledge partnership". For the better effect it is sometimes assumed to extend the group of cooperating entities by Labour Offices and Universities. All these subjects have certain possibilities and knowledge at their disposal which can jointly make good basis for creating a system of vocational education on the level of powiat and voivodeship adequately to the existing needs and opportunities.