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- **Serbia**
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- **Kosovo**
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- **Bosnia and Herzegovina**
- **Croatia**

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**VET TEACHER TRAINING SYSTEM
IN THE REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA**

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I. BACKGROUND

The Republic of Macedonia is situated in the heart of the Balkan Peninsula with an area of 25 713 square kilometres. According to the last census of 2002, Macedonia has a total population of 2 022 547 inhabitants. One quarter of them live in the capital Skopje, which is the largest city, a political, cultural and economical centre.

From 1945, Macedonia was one of the six republics in the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. In September 8, 1991 with a referendum, Macedonia was separated from the Yugoslav federation and became a sovereign and independent state. The same year in November 17, the Parliament adopted the new Constitution, guaranteeing the rule of law, a democratic political system, individual human rights and freedom. According to the Constitution, the political system in the Republic is based on the parliamentary democracy.

The Republic of Macedonia is a member of the United Nations (1993), the Council of Europe, and the WTO. There is an intensive cooperation with the OSCE, NATO, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, etc. In April 2001, the Stabilisation and Association Agreement (SAA) between the European Communities and their Member States and the Republic of Macedonia was signed. This was an important step for the country that is targeting toward membership in EU, NATO and other processes for European and world integration.

On 14 December 2005 the Republic of Macedonia became an EU candidate country and expects the decision to open negotiations for EU accession. This is main priority of the Government, also strongly supported by all political parties and the entire society. It is the only political matter with total consensus by all sides. According to the polls, popular support for integration in EU is almost 90%.

The current situation is rather turbulent with very low rate of the economic growth. A serious political and security crisis in 2001 revealed severe weaknesses in the country. Strong political and administrative effort is required to take forward the process of reform. Liquidation of large loss making enterprises was delayed and privatisation of the state-owned enterprises was done improperly. Public administration, the pension funds, systems of judiciary, health, and education are in the process of reforming.

The biggest burden for the country is the high unemployment rate, approaching a tragic number of 40%. Most of the unemployed hold a secondary education degree. The unemployment rate is highest in the age group from 20 till 29. Most of them are waiting for job 4 and more years. This big army of unemployed people was created mainly as a consequence of the process of privatisation when the big enterprises were liquidated. Also there is a misbalance between the demands of the labour market and the offer for the working profiles in demand. Besides economic revitalisation, education and training is perceived as a key saviour that can take the country out of this depression. Formal and non-formal education is at the moment going through the most radical reform processes, maybe the most radical since it was re-established after the Second World War.

II. CURRENT SITUATION IN VET TT

1. VET IN THE GENERAL EDUCATION SYSTEM

According to the Law on Secondary Education (Article 52), students can enroll secondary vocational school as full-time and part-time, after they have completed the elementary education, which means at the age of 14.

In RM there are 91 public secondary schools with 5749 teachers and 93 526 students. There are also 5 private secondary schools with 848 students and 119 teachers.¹ Only 16 of these schools are gymnasiums, and the others are VET schools or combined schools that offer gymnasium as well as vocational programmes. In 2003/2004, 25 999 pupils in RM enrolled the first year of secondary education, which represents 86.3% of the cohort that finished primary school. It means that there is a high percentage of 13.6% at the age of 14 who are excluded from further education.

The percentage of *dropouts* in secondary schooling is 2.84% per year, or a total of 11.76%, from the first till the last year of schooling. This percentage of dropouts in secondary education is exactly double compared to the dropouts in elementary education.²

The public vocational education can last for two, three and four years. Till now there has been a low interest for the *two-year* vocational training for work, which is the first, lowest level of vocational qualification. Such programmes are offered only in a small number of vocations: mechanics, construction, electro-techniques, etc. *Three-year* vocational education programmes, which are the second level of vocational qualification, are attended by 9.9% of students, which is a significantly low percent compared to 39.3% of students who attend high schools (gymnasia) and 50.8% who attend *four-year* study programmes in secondary vocational schools. In total, there are 91 three-year vocational programmes for different profiles. In these programmes, students learn approx. 50% general subjects, 30% vocational theoretical subjects, and 20% practical training.

Three-year vocational education has not been reformed. Only some of the technical programmes related to the machine and electro-technique occupations, are in the process of reforming through the German GTZ project. In this project the dual system is implemented, where the ratio between theory and practice is 50:50. One half of the practical learning, meaning 25% of total, is taking place in companies. Still, there are big problems for broader implementation of the dual system, because of the non-developed labour market and the lack of companies who can deliver such training. Reforming of the four-year secondary education started in 1996. The new concept has been experimentally implemented since 1999, with the support of the PHARE and CARDS programmes. Six years were needed for all curricula to be reformed, but from this school year (2005/2006) all vocational schools started to work according to the new curricula. A major change in this concept is the broadening of the hitherto narrowly specialised programmes in the vocational schools. In the new concept there are 14 branches with 43 profiles³.

¹ According to the data at the end of 2002/2003 school year

² Data for the school year 2003/2004, source: Draft program for secondary education

³ Branches means occupational fields (in macedonian it is called 'struki', and profiles are occupations 'zanimanja')

Specialist education is open to candidates who have completed the 4-year programme and have working experience (from two to five years, depending on the course). Specialist education students work under mentorship, mostly for one year, then they have to pass a specialist exam, upon which they acquire level IV of vocational qualification.

Adult education and training can be obtained through several study routes:

- Acquiring vocational education in *schools* according to curricula verified by the state institutions. Currently there are 15 schools for basic adult education with 586 students and 56 teachers;
- Curricula and courses at the *workers' vocational training centres*. These courses are with different duration and they are tailored to the needs of the labour market as well as to the personal needs of the candidates;
- Curricula for vocational training, additional training and specialisation, after or in addition to the secondary vocational education.

In the past years little attention was paid to adult education. This issue is regulated within the Laws on Primary and Secondary Education. A few years ago, in the frames of reforming vocational schools, some activities for reforming adult education began. The strategy on Adult Education is in preparation, and a separate Law on this matter is expected in 2007. With this Law, the system of adult education will have its own legislation, with measures to organise and establish providers for educational services for adults, enable better connection between formal education and informal forms of adult education, improve relations between labour market and the institutions for adult education, make regulation about financing of adult education, etc.

2. TEACHERS WORK

Until July 2005 public education has been highly centralised. Expenditures for the education sector are allocated from the state budget to the Ministry of Education. Only 3.6% of GDP goes to education: 57% is for the primary education, 24% for secondary education, incl. VET, and 19% is allocated to higher education. About 80% of these resources go to teacher salaries. The Ministry distributes expenses for the salaries to the schools. Teachers get their salaries every month with 5-15 days delay. With much more delay expenses for electricity, water, heating, and other costs of schools are distributed.

Teachers' salaries have the priority in financing, but in spite of that, the social status of teachers is very low. Teacher salary is a bit smaller than the average net-wage in Macedonia, which is approximately EUR 200. From time to time, the Teachers Union organises a big strike, demanding better conditions for teachers, according to the collective agreement that was signed with the Government. The Ministry cannot provide enough money for reconstruction and repair of the school buildings although some of them are almost ruined. Schools do not receive any amount of money for equipment, teaching and learning materials for the instruction. The Ministry of Education is aware that education is in a very difficult condition.

From July 2005, with the Law on Local Government, education started the process of decentralisation, which means greater responsibility and engagement on the part of the local self-government authorities for all issues related to the quality of school

work, finance, etc. According to the new regulation, expenditures for VET schools should be transferred from the state budget to the municipality. Then municipality distributes the money to the schools using a formula, which is based on various quotients, among which the number of students in the school is the most important. Since the decentralisation process began, a lot of practical problems have occurred. While the local government and the Ministry argue, schools desperately wait for the sources they need.

There are still no developed mechanisms for evaluation of the teachers work, but strategic documents in this field have already been prepared. Standards for measuring the quality in teaching and learning should be defined.

Level of training for vocational teachers for implementation of the reformed curricula is different. Those who were earlier included in the PHARE VET programme are very well trained, but there is a significant number of teachers who are not trained to apply new methods of teaching and to utilize the new equipment that schools have received. That is the reason why in spite of the numerous projects for improving the quality of the teaching process, the traditional approach still dominates in most classrooms. Students are mostly passive during the classes and they are assessed based on the repetition of facts that they have learned. This imbalance should be diminished in the VET 4 phase, as training of these teachers is one of the main goals of this programme.

3. INITIAL TEACHER TRAINING

The *qualification requirements* of VET teachers in Macedonia are regulated by Law on secondary education⁴. According to this, teachers in secondary education may be persons who have graduated in the appropriate studies at a University faculty with a Bachelor degree, and have passed the professional examination. Teachers in the secondary education may be also persons who have graduated from other faculties, but have acquired pedagogical, didactical and psychological training at the corresponding faculties and have passed the professional examination. Within this regulation, the initial education of teachers is placed at the *university*, at the so-called Teachers Faculties, such as: Faculty of Philosophy, Faculty of Philology, Faculty of Natural Sciences and Mathematics, Faculty of Physical Education, Faculty of Art and Music.

Teachers who are graduated at other non-teaching faculties such as: technical, medical, law and economy, agriculture, forestry and tourism, do not acquire any pedagogical training during their studies. After their graduation, if they decide to make career as vocational teachers, they have to acquire an additional pedagogical qualification for teachers in the form of a *compensatory programme* on top of the acquired initial education. This consecutive, compensatory programme (pedagogical minimum) is offered at the Faculty of Philosophy in Skopje. For this additional qualification, a mentorship system is used, which means that traditional teaching courses are not organised. The students prepare themselves for the exams according to the curriculum which concentrates on psychology, pedagogy and vocational didactics. There is a general opinion that this type of training is insufficient and inappropriate, so in the last years there are initiatives for its improvement.

⁴ *Law on Secondary Education, Article 72*, "Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia" No. 44/95, 24/96, 34/96, 35/97, 82/99, 29/02, 40/03, 42/03, 67/04 and 55 /05

Related to this, the most significant policy document prepared recently is the “*National strategy for development of education in RM for the period 2005-2015*”. In this document it is stated that there is an urgent need for improving the system of pre-service and in-service training of the teaching and managing staff of schools. Therefore a number of further activities are foreseen. The first step is for the Ministry of Education to formulate and codify standards for teacher training and to define the list of professional and vocational competencies that each teacher should possess. Teachers who possess these competencies will get "license" to work as a teacher. Special institutions will be established responsible for giving teacher licenses. Further, there will be list of indicators against which the teacher's work will be assessed. According to these indicators, teachers will get points enabling personal career development.

In line with the aims of the new national strategy, the Faculty of Philosophy in Skopje has now developed a one-year programme for initial training of future VET teachers, consisting of ten modules, in which flexible pathways to learning are offered. This programme is defined on the basis of the required competencies; it is practically oriented and compensates for the deficiency of pedagogical, didactical and vocational training.

4. IN-SERVICE TEACHER TRAINING

While the system of pre-service teacher training is mainly located at the Universities, the in-service teacher training is under responsibility of the Bureau for Development of Education (BDE) that is a part of the Ministry of Education and Science.

Concerning the professional development of teachers, the present law regulates that: "the beginner teacher and the professional associate (school pedagogue, school psychologists, etc.) works one year as an intern in which time (s)he will be trained with a help of a mentor from the school... (s)he passes a professional exam in a period of 6 months to 1 year at the latest after finishing supervised teaching practice experience and by a specific programme approved by the Ministry of Education" (Law on Secondary Education, article 66-67). Here it is also stated that "... principals, teachers and professional associates are obliged to develop professionally through the years" (LSE, article 38).

For many years, in-service teacher training has not been systematically organised and it has been carried out incidentally. The main reasons for this are the lack of a national strategy in this field, an insufficient and ineffective co-operation between the relevant institutions (BDE, University, VET schools), and first and foremost the lack of national material and financial support. As a consequence, in-service training has been predominantly carried out with the support of various projects funded by donors: PHARE, CARDS, USAID, WB, FIOOM, and GTZ. Training seminars are mainly focused on new methods of teaching and learning, the pedagogical use of information technology, etc. Only some of the teachers are included in these training seminars, so there are still a huge number who have not received any additional pedagogical or vocational training for many years.

According to new legislation in the pipeline, a Board of Accreditation will approve the institutions that will be authorised to provide teacher training. Accreditation of

these institutions will depend on their capacities and the quality of teacher training that they can offer. Establishing *a free market of accredited teacher training providers* in the country has already begun and it is heavily supported by the 'Education Modernisation Project'. Included in the new legislation in preparation is a system of *career development for teachers* that will soon be implemented. It will enable promotion of teachers not only in terms of titles: 'teacher-beginner', 'teacher', 'expert teacher' and 'mentor teacher', but also in the salary that they will receive. For each step, a higher degree of vocational and professional competences are needed and a set of indicators will be defined upon which the teachers will be certified. In the present circumstances - when the teaching profession is devaluated with such a low material and social status of teachers - this model could be a systematic step towards a more dynamic mobility of teachers and by giving clear incentives also lead to a better motivation for professional development.

III. CHALLENGES, DEVELOPMENTS AND TRENDS

Strengthening the system for pre-service and in-service training of teachers is one of the top priorities in the further development of education in the country. For achieving this, several activities have significant importance. First, the new *legislation* has to be prepared and implemented. The new Law on Vocational Education and Training is in the procedure for adoption, there is draft version ready in the Ministry. According to the new regulation, two important bodies will be established: the *National Council for VET* and the *Centre for VET*. The National VET Council will consist of ten members from all relevant institutions. It will have an advisory function in creating strategy for development of VET on the macro level. The VET Centre will be directly responsible for quality in implementation of VET.

A draft version of the new Law on Higher Education has been prepared as well. After that, the Law on Adult Education and Life-Long Learning has to be prepared for the first time. This will create conditions for implementation of the life-long learning concept comprising recognition of formal, non-formal and in-formal learning enabling for the first time in Macedonia educational mobility for all population groups, and it will especially be helpful for prequalification and for reducing unemployment.

The main challenges in further development and sharpening the focus of VET TT in the forthcoming period are:

- Practical implementation of the concept of 'learning outcomes', based on standards of competences and skills that students are expected to acquire;
- Training of teachers for mastering active methods of teaching in the schools and enabling them to make pedagogically meaningful use of ICT;
- Ensuring better quality and develop mechanism for quality assurance;
- Developing standards for national qualifications;
- Implementation of the new role of the Inspectorate in education (from control to advice);
- Establishing of the State Examination Centre.

IV. DONOR REFORM ACTIVITIES AND OWN RESOURCES

There are a huge number of activities carried out for reforming the VET system in the Republic of Macedonia, mainly funded by donors and the Governments of foreign countries.

VET reform started with the PHARE Programme for innovation of vocational education and training in 1998. One of the main goals of this programme is the preparation of teachers for implementation of new curricula and the application of active methods, techniques and strategies. Now the fourth phase, called *CARDS VET 4*, is being implemented.

Currently the largest project in Macedonia is the 'Education Modernisation Project' - *EMP* with a joint budget of USD 20 million financed by loans from the World Bank, grants from the Netherlands and own investments by the Government of the Republic of Macedonia. The main goal in relation to VET teacher training is to establish an accreditation system to ensure that services for teacher training during work are provided by more training providers which accomplish the appropriate quality criteria.

The Secondary Education Activity (*SEA*) project funded by USAID supports 50 pilot project schools in professional development of teachers with a view to applying interactive educational strategies, which integrates theoretical knowledge in the practical learning. As part of this approach, *SEA* also is setting up virtual companies and gives donations to establish real companies in VET schools. Furthermore, the *SEA* project has established a training programme for secondary school principals.

Activities of the *e-school project*, also funded by USAID, is focused on training of teachers for introduction, connection and integration of project learning, information and communication technology in the local community.

The *GTZ* project funded by Germany for the VET sector concentrates on the three-year VET programmes and contains considerable didactic and vocationally specific teacher training delivered in 8 pilot schools.

All these reform activities in vocational teacher training are relevant and much needed responses to the new demands of the modern society that requires trained teachers whose role is changed. However, the main weakness in these reforming processes are that they are short-time and that they have not had real impacts in terms of affecting bigger changes in the overall VET system. The links with national higher education institutions responsible for teacher training is very loose, to put it mildly.

A more global, inclusive and 'embedded' approach is needed to ensure compatibility and effectiveness of the reform activities.

V. REFERENCES

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http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/index_en.html

LIST OF RELEVANT ADDRESSES

Ministry of Education and Science, [http:// mon.gov.mk](http://mon.gov.mk)

National Program For Educational Development, <http://www.npro.edu.mk>

Bureau for Development of Education in RM, <http://www.bro.gov.mk>

University "Ss. Cyril and Methodius" , <http://www.ukim.edu.mk>

Faculty of Philosophy – Skopje, <http://www.fzf.ukim.edu.mk>

