HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING IN LITHUANIA AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR DESIGNING AND IMPLEMENTATION OF REGIONAL VET PARTNERSHIPS

Jonathan Winterton, Daiva Bukantaitė, Vidmantas Tūtlys

ABSTRACT

Article aims at disclosing the conditions and requirements posed by the historical development of vocational education and training in Lithuania to the designing and implementation of regional VET partnerships. The development of vocational education and its context in three main periods (evolution of the society and statehood of Lithuania in the first half of the 20th century, the Soviet occupation and the development of the society and state after the restoring of the statehood in 1990) are analyzed, seeking to disclose the implications of this development for the designing and implementation of regional VET partnerships.

KEYWORDS: vocational education and training (VET), VET system, social stakeholders, social partnership
INTRODUCTION

In the process of vocational education and training development by implementing different new processes and initiatives, policy makers always encounter the necessity to consider not only the current context and environment conditions but also the path of their development. The historical development of the VET system and its social, economical and cultural context create unique conditions and requirements for the designing and implementation of different new initiatives or measures aimed at improving and developing the process of vocational training. This article aims at disclosing such conditions and requirements posed by the historical development of vocational education and training in Lithuania to the designing and implementation of the regional VET partnerships. It is based on the research performed in the framework of LLP Leonardo da Vinci project “Modelling of the regional networks of vocational education and training in Lithuania” LLP-IdV-TOI-2007-LT-0003.

The development of vocational education and training in the period of the evolution of the national statehood of Lithuania in the 20th century. The development of modern vocational education and training in Lithuania experienced challenges and influences of sharp breakages and transitions of different socioeconomic systems and political ideologies in the 20th century. The first courses of crafts were launched in Lithuania at the beginning of the 20th century after the reforms of tsarist government implemented in 1905 (Čepėnas, 1992). A more systematic vocational training in the fields of agriculture and crafts was developed only after the establishment of the independent state in 1918. Until 1926 the crafts schools were mainly created by monasteries and charity associations and their main aim was to help to integrate orphans and children of other socially excluded groups in the labour market. The first public schools of crafts were created in 1926 and the department for special vocational education and training at the Ministry of Education was established only in 1937 (Čepėnas, 1992). Looking at the institutional structure of VET in Lithuania in the period of 1918-1940, three types of vocational training institutions can be discerned: secondary crafts schools, schools of agriculture and special secondary vocational schools in agronomy, veterinary and technology. These institutions provided young people with vocational skills and qualifications mainly in the fields of agriculture and crafts, as Lithuanian economy of that period was based on agriculture. In 1937 there were 14 public special vocational schools (secondary crafts schools, lower secondary schools of construction and trade) with 2474 pupils and 30 private schools with 3845 pupils (Lietuvos Respublikos Švietimo ministerijos 1937 m. veikimo apyskaita, 1939).

Undeveloped industry and tertiary sector with domination of agriculture in the structure of national economy was one of the most important factors which determined such a slow development of vocational education and training. The rise of education and training in agriculture was related to the implementation of the reform of agriculture in 1922, which opened possibilities for the development of many private farms. The training of small land owners and small farmers was also regarded as an instrument of economical and social integration of these social groups. The development of industry and services was regarded as one of the most important challenges and tasks, seeking for the strengthening of national identity, social stability of the society and solution of the main social problems, such as poverty and emigration (Trimitas Nr. 19, 1934). Such a structure of economy and society, as well as the authoritarian regime of the government imposed after the coup d’etat in 1926 could not create favourable conditions for the development of social partnership and the bodies representing the interests of workers and employees.

Analysing preconditions for the development of cooperation and partnership in vocational training in that period the following conclusions can be drawn:

1. Due to the domination of agriculture in economy and the agrarian mentality of
the society, there were no favourable conditions for institutional development of the social stakeholders, representing the interests of economical and semi-professional groups (unions, employers' organizations, organizations of professional groups).

2. This period did not create any possibilities and conditions for the development of effective networks or systems of institutions, providing vocational education and training. Slow development of the system of activities, underdevelopment of industry and tertiary sectors caused the corresponding quantitative and qualitative underdevelopment of VET institutions, and low density of VET institutions could not create conditions for the development of effective cooperation and networking between these institutions.

3. Training and provision of skills in the society due to different external and internal factors was very fragmented, inconsistent and failing to create the synergy between individuals, institutions and social groups. A strong influence of the state to the system of education and system of activities practiced by the tsarist Russian empire until World War I and by the occupational regime of the Germany during World War I was inherited by the government of Lithuanian state, and it presumed the domination of vertical bureaucratic relations between the state and institutions providing vocational education and training.

4. This period did not succeed in creating conditions for social norms of trust based coordination between institutions, communities and individuals in the field of vocational education and training.

5. Analysing the attitudes of the society towards vocational education and training, the position of farmers and peasants can be noted, which gave priority to education needed for agricultural activities and to higher education which could help to provide their children with intellectual professions (priests, lawyers, medical doctors), ignoring the importance of training in crafts and industrial skills. Appeals of the intellectuals of that period to seek for coherent and equal development in all sectors of education, in order to ensure cohesive economical, social and cultural development of the society were not listened to attentively.

Development of VET institutions in the Soviet period: the main socioeconomic and institutional characteristics. The Soviet system of vocational education and training was integrated in the centrally planned economy and so called military-industrial complex. Totalitarian industrialization was directed only to the strengthening of military power of the Soviet Union, and it demanded centralized planning and the development of human resources. The centralized system of vocational education and training had the main objective: in the shortest possible time to prepare a maximal quantity of narrowly specialised mostly low skilled workforce, which could satisfy the needs of the developing heavy industry. The lack of labour force in the fifth and seventh decades of the 20th century further pressed central planning institutions to direct a greater part of secondary school graduates to vocational training schools (Kerr, 1990). For this purpose, an intensive vocational guidance was used in order to direct young people to the workplaces, lacking labour force most. While reaching the goal, each secondary and vocational school retained close cooperation relations with enterprises, factories, collective farms and the so-called "Soviet farms". The said enterprises and organizations arranged for practice places for school students and employed the majority of persons, graduating from vocational schools.

Transition from one education level to another was regulated by the centralized system of assessment of acquired knowledge and skills. One of the most important filters in this system was the exams of the 8th grade school which separated the pupils who afterwards had to go to vocational schools and to acquire worker qualifications, needed for the planned economy. Due to these reasons, vocational education lost its social prestige. Sociosystemic implications of the Soviet centralized VET system are designed in Fig. 1.
Elements of the Soviet post-totlitarian system

<table>
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<th>Totalitarian communist ideology</th>
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<td>Authoritarian machine of rule, based on the system of nomenclature of ruling party and complex bureaucratic planning mechanism and repressive force structures.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Centralized planned economy, formal planning of resources with weak relations with real needs and possibilities.</td>
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<td>Hierarchical centralized rule of society eliminating the possibilities of the individual to influence the development of economy and society.</td>
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Vocational education and training is based on the principle of the centralized and forced mobilization

- Possibilities of individual to choose education and qualification are very limited
- Most of the acquired qualifications are very narrow and the stagnation of the system of activities does not create sufficient conditions for professional development
- Planned vocational education and training become not only the measure for the supply of human resources for the planned economy, but also executed the function of indoctrination helping to create and to govern masses loyal to the posttotalitarian regime.

Priorities for heavy industry and production of the means of production, ignoring the needs to develop other sectors of economy.

Problem of coordination in the supply of resources creates the situation of the forced and obligatory provision of resources, causing ineffectiveness of economy and big losses.

Lack of motivation for the development and growth of productivity, because of no interest to increase the plans of production.

Evolution of passive and completely depended from the state masses of society.

Consequences of the post-totalitarian system

Possibilities for individual initiatives in designing the paths of professional development were almost absent. The processes of learning and professional activities were rather strictly separated in the planned economy in order to prevent the mobility of the workforce, which was not compatible with the principles of centralised planning of human resources. Despite the fact that in the official propaganda a lot of attention was paid to “education of the working population” the system itself depressed and neutralised individual aspirations and incentives to learn and develop skills and abilities in the professional and personal fields. There was a predominantly technocratic orientation towards vocational education and training, serving the needs of heavy industry and military-industrial complex. Soviet totalitarian system, defined by the prominent Czech dissident Vaclav Havel, post-totalitarian system enhanced social apathy and opportunism in all spheres of social life and in the relationships between the regime and individuals. Vaclav Havel indicates that the post-totalitarian state of the society means that the regime does not need to exercise military power and terror to control the society, because people in such a society execute this control themselves, cooperating with the regime. Having no possibilities to develop their individual paths of professional development and subjected to the state regulation in choosing occupations, vocational education or higher education fields, people became rather indifferent to their future related with the professional activity. According to Vaclav Havel, the limitations of the human freedom (including in the fields of occupation and professional development choice) were related to the striving of the regime to limit human existence with caring about narrow personal well-being and separation of humans from participation in solution of the
essential social questions and problems (Havel, 1991). Free development of humans in the professional field and the development of skills and qualification are possible only with the autonomy of a person, his freedom of reflection and self-reflection, critical thinking and understanding, which is used not only in the judgments and decisions of the professional life but also in the social spheres that surround it. Therefore, such a concept of professional development and the related concepts could not be acceptable for the post-totalitarian system. For the post-totalitarian rule of society it is necessary to prevent differentiation of its internal development, including prevention of free differentiation in the fields of professional activities and professional socialization. When the single employer is the state regime, it can be rather easily implemented by unlimited manipulating of the existence of citizens and regulation of their professional lives. Therefore, forced and segregational vocational education and training in the Soviet system was not only an important measure in the planned economy, assuring preparation of human resources according to the needs of the system, but also served as an instrument to shape social masses with the attitudes and views needed for sustaining the regime that makes it not only external but also internal support of the post-totalitarian system.

Assessing conditions for the development of cooperation and partnership in the Soviet period, the following conclusions can be drawn:

1. Free development of socioprofessional groups and stakeholders (trade unions, employer organizations, professional organizations) was not possible in principle due to the totalitarian system. Therefore, there was no experience for the development of such stakeholders at the reconstitution of the independent state after the collapse of the Soviet system.

2. Lithuania inherited VET institutional system which was adopted to the planned economy and totalitarian society and was not suitable for new conditions of the market economy and democratic society. This inheritance of VET institutions and their infrastructure (material and human resources) could not compensate or outweigh negative influence of the absence of the social partnership and cooperation in this system.

3. Experience of the post-totalitarian society and the domination of vertical interinstitutional relationships, based only on the external control and planning, created lack of trust in the society and local communities and reluctance to create free social organizations and communities.

4. Segregational character of the Soviet VET system caused the loss of prestige of vocational education and training in the post-Soviet society. The experience of vocational training, which was subjected to the planned economy, had influence upon the thinking of employers that VET system even in the market economy must provide them with the workforce which completely suits to the needs of the workplace and needs no additional adaptation. VET institutions also had to abandon the stereotypical thinking that the state and employers have to indicate comprehensive training needs and guidelines and to become more autonomous and creative.

Development of VET system and partnerships in VET after restoring independent state in 1990.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, economical liberalism together with nationalism in the most post-Soviet and post-socialistic countries was understood and accepted as the only possible way of the reconstruction of the society, economy and statehood. Therefore, most of the institutional and social settings which remained from the Soviet system or reminded the relics of the Soviet system were rather strictly rejected as incompatible with the new ways and prospects of development. However, a deeper analysis can show that these rejections were still rather formal and concerned more external and formal aspects of economical and social life, while the inheritance of the “Soviet way” of understanding, thinking and acting have had a very deep impact on the attitudes towards vocational training in
the new socio-economical conditions.

The Soviet post-totalitarism, by depriving the person from the freedom of the self-realization in the society and professional life, could not entirely suppress these strivings and even strengthened expectations and thirst for such freedom. Therefore, the collapse of the Soviet system opened possibilities for the realization of these strivings of individual self-realization in the professional field and, at that moment, the only possible alternative for such realization was liberal market economy and market individualism. It can explain the attractiveness of this model and turning it to the powerful dreamworld, which captured imaginations and expectations of the big part of the society, including political leaders and the main stakeholders in the fields of education and the world of activities.

Another important dreamworld of the beginning of the last decade of the last century with regard to education and training was related to the national and ethnical rebirth ideology. The efforts to redirect vocational education and training to the education of the patriots of the country with the developed national and ethnical self-identity can be noted. This development of national identity was declared as one of the most important missions of the reformed vocational education and training. It was aimed to integrate vocational education and training in the widely discussed concept of the "ethnical school" (tautinė mokykla) declaring, the education of ethnical identity as one of the underlying missions of the whole system of education. Later this dreamworld lost its initial power and influence in the society due to fast socioeconomic changes and the outset of eurointegration process.

Transition to the socioeconomic and political models of the Western democratic society and liberal market economy was influenced by typical beliefs of the modern capitalism. Many of these beliefs and doctrines were imposed by the development of the globalized capitalism or supercapitalism (Reich, 2007). Several such beliefs and doctrines can be distinguished:

a. Belief of socially responsible enterprises deliberately and willingly accepting obligations to participate in the creation of the welfare for the employees and society, including care for the training of employees and social obligations to the surrounding community and society (including the field of vocational education and training) (Reich, 2007). Such a belief was quite present in the discourse of the social and education policy makers. It can partially explain the reluctance of the government to impose stricter legal obligations and requirements which could prevent the opportunistic economic behaviour of enterprises, contradicting social and ethical norms. Rethinking of this belief and its influence upon the development of relations between enterprises and vocational education and training institutions, it can be stated that such cooperation could develop mostly in those cases when it could bring concrete and mostly short-term gains for the enterprises – solving their recruitment problems, etc.

b. Belief that the interests of business in principle correspond to the needs and interests of the whole society, giving priority to the society of consumers and shareholders and ignoring the needs of the civil society. Such market absolutism can be easily observed in many post-communist countries (Gylys, 2008). It is also present in the discourse of the employment and vocational training. This way of thinking is very alike to the thinking models of the planned economy and post-totalitarian society, stating that the interests of the post-totalitarian system and ruling regime are in complete conformity with the needs and interests of all people. It can partially explain the attractiveness of such beliefs in the post-Soviet societies.

c. Belief in the limited pool of human talent in the society developed by the human capital theory, industrial taylornistic models of work organization and massive production models of industrial capitalism (Brown, Lauder, Green, 2001). This belief justifies the increas-
ing inequality of employment possibilities and polarization of the employment quality and rejects the need to widen the accessibility of training and skills upgrading. It is closely related to the stereotyped understanding of the division of white-collar and manual or blue-collar work and the image of vocational education and training, inherited from the Soviet system that vocational training is designed only for losers, who are not able to seek for higher levels of education and better employment positions.

Lithuanian VET system is still in the transitional period from the state-regulated (or supply model) to the market regulated (demand) model. It is an interesting fact that the initiative to introduce and strengthen social partnership in VET belongs to the Ministry of Science and Education.

Participation of social partners in vocational education and training system was first defined in The White Paper (1999) and the Law on VET in Lithuania (1997). Social partners were authorised with concrete functions in VET:

- to supply proposals to the Lithuanian VET Council, while defining requirements for VET curricula (modules) and final qualification examinations;
- to organise final qualification examinations;
- to register practical training agreements/contracts between school, enterprises and a trainee;
- to supervise practical training agreements and their implementation.

Taking into consideration that Lithuanian VET and general education had been traditionally school (but not company) - oriented and centralised, this new Law brought a radical reform into the VET system.

The White Paper (1999) described social partnership as a regular cooperation, negotiation and coordination of interests among governmental institutions (mainly, Ministries of Education and Science, Ministry of Social Security and Labour, VET schools), employees' representatives (trade unions) and employers' representatives (associated business structures). Thus, the first practical steps, trying to coordinate educational and vocational activity systems, were implemented in 1998, when the state delegated several concrete functions in VET for social partners – Lithuanian Chambers of Commerce, Industry and Crafts, and a few years later to the Chamber of Agriculture.

Though Lithuania tried to transfer the best practice from the German dual system, this initiative has never been fully implemented. Much attention was paid to the development of the qualifications demand model.

Rimantas Laužackas (2005) discerns three levels of social partnership in the VET system of Lithuania:

- National policy level. At this level, social partnership is ensured through the activities of the Council of Vocational Education and Training, established on the basis of the tripartite cooperation with the participation of government institutions, employer organizations and trade unions. The Council closely cooperates with the Ministries of Education and Science and Social Affairs in the coordination of activities of the VET system. The main objective of the Council is to ensure the coordination of interests of all main social partners in the processes of the VET system. However, it should be noted that this institution plays a more advisory role in the decision making processes.

- Sector level. At this level, the main institutions ensuring social partnership are the branch expert groups and the Central Expert Group of Branches. These expert groups are also constituted on the tripartite basis and consist of representatives of the branch employers, trade unions and VET institutions. Their main responsibility is designing the standards of initial vocational education and training under supervision of Methodological Centre for Vocational Education and Training (a public institution, established by the Ministry of Educa-
tion and Science).

c. Practical vocational level. At this level the main actors are different local working groups composed by representatives of VET schools and employers. These groups create vocational training standards within separate occupations and develop the curricula for vocational schools. Social partnership at the practical vocational level can also be discerned in other processes of the VET system: co-operation between VET schools and employers in the organization of practical training or between enterprises and centres of labour market training in the field of continuing training of employees. However, this partnership is rather passive, fragmentary, scattered and unsystematic (Laužackas, 2005).

The following main processes of modern VET development in Lithuania can be discerned, which have had the biggest influence upon the development of social partnership in vocational education and training:

1. Reform of vocational education and training system, turning from the centralized supply-led system of VET to a more decentralized and more demand-oriented system, providing more autonomy to VET institutions in curriculum design, organization and implementation of education and training processes, selection of training methods and cooperation with social stakeholders and partners, especially with employers and their organizations. Despite the fact that this reform aimed at wide decentralization of the VET system, orienting it to the needs of the labour market, at the same time the Ministry of Education and Science and other governmental institutions retained and in some regards even strengthened their power and influence upon vocational education and training. The Ministry of Science and Education and the Ministry of Social Security and Labour still are the main policy makers, initiators and coordinators of the Lithuanian VET system. Methodological Centre for Vocational Education and Training under the Ministry of Education and Science provides methodical assistance to all levels of VET. Based on legal acts of Lithuania, mainly the state or the state founded institutions, with an exception of Chambers of Commerce and the Chamber of Agriculture, remain the main actors in the VET system. For this reason, governmental institutions have had a big influence in proposing and disseminating (or even imposing) the concepts of competences and qualifications. VET standards, elaborated by Methodological Centre of Vocational Education and Training in cooperation with the branch expert groups, representing the interests of employers, unions and vocational training school became one of the most important fields of application and use of the concept of competences.

2. Establishment and development of the labour market, making VET and higher education revise their objectives and refer to the needs of employers in skilled human resources. Because of the complicated economical and social situation in the context of the transition to the market economy and the growth of unemployment during the first decade of independence, employers acquired more powers in negotiations with employees and used this power, pushing employees to accept their proposed conditions. This situation also discouraged employees from participation in unions. On the other side, rather voluntaristic laws, regulating labour relations, opened a lot of possibilities for the unilateral decisions of employers in the field of recruitment, work conditions, training, career and wage setting fields (Socialiniai pokyčiai: Lietuva 1990-1998, 2000). Analysing the discussion between employers and VET institutions, a tendency can be noticed to shift responsibility for the current problems or shortages in the VET to each other criticising for the application of outdated curriculum and training methods (position of employers towards VET institutions) or for passive attitude to partnership in the organization of practical training and curriculum design (position of VET institutions towards employers). A tough competition for the skilled labour force, increasing the risk of poaching and emigration of skilled workforce discourage employers from more significant financial investment into vocational training projects (for example, establishment of practical training centres). The involvement of employers is in most
cases too formal and based on the top-down approach, when employer organizations only formally execute the functions in the VET system, delegated by the state.

Concluding the analysis of historical evolution of VET in Lithuania, its influence upon the existing practices of cooperation and partnership in vocational education, the following explanatory model of this process can be proposed (Fig. 2).

**Fig. 2. Development of cooperation and partnership in vocational education in Lithuania**
CONCLUSIONS

1. Socioeconomical and political development of the society and state, institutional development of Lithuania in the path of transformations from agrarian economy and social structure from the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century to the Soviet planned economy and post-totalitarian state almost until the last decade of the 20th century did not create favourable conditions for the establishment and development of constant regional partnerships in the field of vocational education and training on the regional level and determined some complicated mental, communicational and social problems which need to be solved in designing and development of such partnerships - weak social partnership, very limited and too formal communication between employers, VET schools and local government institutions, rather high distrust between the involved social stakeholders, etc. In search of possible solutions to these problems it is possible to refer to the experiences of other countries, but at the same time it is necessary to consider the specificity and uniqueness of VET development in Lithuania and its environment, by carefully examining the transferable measures and evaluating their adaptability.

2. On the one hand, current development of vocational education and training is influenced by the inheritance of the know-how, human resources, institutions and the ways of thinking from the Soviet past, and on the other, by a rather strong orientation to the liberal market economy model in the field of vocational education and training from the other side. However, weak social partnership and lack of the involvement of social partners in vocational education and training leads to the necessity for the state to take part of the responsibilities and roles of social partners and stakeholders, increasing its influence in the regulation of VET. Such situation is not favourable for the development of an open and flexible VET system and for regional partnerships between stakeholders in this field.

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SANTRAUKA

Straipsnis siekia atskleisti istorinės profesinio rengimo raidos Lietuvoje sąlygas ir reikalavimus, keliamus regioninių partnerystės projektavimui ir įgyvendinimui. Analizuojama profesinio rengimo plėtra ir jo kontekstas trimis laikotarpiais – Lietuvos visuomenės ir valstybingumo vystymasis pirmoje XX amžiaus pusėje, tarybinė okupacija ir visuomenės bei valstybės raida atgavus valstybingumą 1990-siais. Siekiama atskleisti šios raidos implikacijas regioninės profesinio rengimo partnerystės projektavimui ir įgyvendinimui.

PAGRINDINĖS SĄVOKOS:

profesinis rengimas, profesinio rengimo sistema, socialiniai dalininkai, socialinė partnerystė
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