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Reshaping the focus and structure of vocational teacher education and training strategy in Lithuania – a systematic approach

In this article the contemporary state of pedagogical qualification of Lithuanian vocational teachers is discussed. The new role of VET teacher and VET school in vocational teacher training, following the lifelong learning paradigm, are discussed. Main approaches, principles and parameters of the new vocational teacher training strategy in Lithuania are revealed and grounded. The structure of VET teacher's professional standard and general scheme for vocational teacher education and training in Lithuania are presented and discussed.

Introduction

Lithuania is facing new challenges and demands on its vocational education and training and vocational teacher education. Research on current Lithuanian VET teacher professional qualification shows great demand for pedagogical qualifications (¹). This article discusses a number of issues: the current state of didactical and vocational qualification of Lithuanian vocational teachers and lecturers (²); the competence-based professional standard of vocational teaching and its structure in relation to the lifelong learning (career path) model; new challenges for vocational teacher education in this lifelong learning model; the role of VET schools in competence based VET teacher education; the quality of the interaction between teacher training institutions and VET schools in initial and continuing professional development of VET teachers; the main approaches, principles and parameters of the new Lithuanian VET teacher education strategy, with its focus on a VET teacher professional standard and teacher education standard based on a modular training approach. The article does not deal with prior learning assessment methodology, assessment tools to measure acquired didactical competences in prior teaching/learning practice and recognition (accreditation) of VET teacher education programmes at European level, currently under development in Lithuania.

New VET teacher and school roles for lifelong learning

The EU Memorandum on lifelong learning (2000) made clear the importance of education as a main driving force in long-term human resource development, which could make Europe more competitive in the world. In addition, the OECD's 'PISA (Programme for international student assessment) study (Buck, 2002) faced politicians with further education development problems, illustrating a poor position and offering numerous proposals for reform. The shift of educational emphasis, summarised in the words 'lifelong learning' (LLL) had started in such countries as Canada and New Zealand and was highly rated by PISA for the first positive results being obtained already. The shift to lifelong learning also concerns that very important part of vocational education system that is vocational teacher education: it insists on changing the role of vocational teachers in VET schools and the role of VET schools in the consecutive and competence-based model of VET teacher education and training. What do these changes of the roles signify and who will feel the challenges in the reality of initial and continuing VET teacher education?

The new VET teacher role is first concerned with a change in pedagogical approach, turning from teacher-centred to student-centred. Following this change in approach, voca-



tional teachers very often present themselves as teaching/learning programme designers and developers, coaches and assistants, members of school activity development teams, consultants in learning and vocational career, facilitators and developers of learning, participants in international projects, cooperation and communication networks, etc. Nevertheless, many teachers still like to teach, but do not like to learn. VET teachers at all levels have to understand the meaning of LLL and follow the LLL approach in their daily work and own personal development.

The lifelong learning model concerns not only a single VET teacher, but a whole VET school strongly linked with the world of work and labour market demands via a changing structure of qualifications and a competence structure for each occupational or professional qualification. It means that each VET school is a part of an educational market and, to survive, has to turn into a learning organisation. Clear understanding of the local, national and international mission of the VET school, ability to design its vision, school staff development plans and quality management systems are all new roles for VET teacher education. The main external features of a learning organisation could be openness to the environment and innovations, and active participation in the processes of change. The main internal features of a learning organisation include: developmental strategy; participation of a VET school community developing a school vision according to a perceived mission; obtaining and disseminating information in all directions; accountability; partnership principles among school departments; flexibility in promotion; a wide range of opportunities to act individually and in teams; emphasis on external relations; self-development of staff; and a positive psychological climate in the organisation.

VET school is important for vocational teachers, together with university or college (providing the vocational teacher with a didactical qualification) and enterprises (providing the vocational teacher with the most advanced, strategically-oriented vocational competences) in providing competence-based VET teacher education focused on the acquisition of advanced practical teaching skills. Integrating a future workplace (VET school) into vocational teacher education and training demands both tutor supervision, provided by the university or college, and a

work mentor (an experienced VET teacher with special competences). Competence-based vocational teacher education and training also demands a new approach to curriculum design, from a curriculum built on separate vocational subjects to one built on integrated modules, where each module is oriented to acquiring a specific competence or set of competences. Such a modular approach to initial and continuing professional development would enable a flexible response to the individual needs of student teachers; prior learning assessment (PLA) methodology and changes in the labour market; could be used to decline (or omit in the case of competences already possessed) modules with little demand in favour of designing new modules with greater relevance. The modular training approach would also enable closer integration of theory and practice, achieving good interaction between teacher training institutions, VET schools and the social partners, establishing the necessary preconditions for developing personal and institutional vocational teacher education and training networks at local, national and international levels. It is obvious, that a vocational teacher is nowadays a networker across school boundaries (Pukelis, Laužackas and Rogojinaru, 1999) and that is the future role of the vocational teacher in VET school. Hence, the VET teacher is becoming a reflective practitioner, or even a small scale research practitioner, since anticipation of changes in the labour market, prognosis of new qualifications or new structures of competences in professions, demands appropriate research competences from the VET teacher. This could be achieved by bringing VET school and university (or other higher educational institution) closer in vocational teacher education (Fullan, 1993). Development of vocational teacher research competences also positively influences VET school capacity to innovate in initial and continuing professional development of vocational teachers and to respond to the demands of the knowledge economy.

Current Lithuanian vocational trainers' professional qualification

Research has involved all the vocational pedagogues (VET teachers and lecturers) in Lithuania. The majority work in the Ministry of Education and Science and the labour market training centres of the Ministry of Social Security and Labour. The formal level of general and pedagogical education of

(¹) Pedagogical qualification in this article is understood as an interrelated and integrated summary of vocational (occupational or professional content knowledge, skills and attitudes) and didactical (knowledge's, skills and attitudes - teaching/learning theories, objectives, methods and means, adjusted to the nature of vocational occupation or profession) qualifications. Each of them (vocational and didactical qualifications) consists of an appropriate set of vocational and didactical competencies (not competences).

(²) Previous VET high schools, staffed mainly by VET lecturers, are converting to VET schools (VET lecturers are becoming VET teachers) or VET colleges. The last of these is already attributed to the non-university higher education sector.

**General statistical data on vocational teachers and lecturers in Lithuania****Table 1**

Category of vocational pedagogue	Informations générales											
	Total	Age (years and percents)			Working experience in vocational field (years and percents)				Pedagogical experience (years and percents)			
		<=30	31-50	>50	0	<=5	6-10	>10	<=5	6-10	11-15	>15
Vocational teachers	2615	5.9	65.0	29.0	25.2	26.4	26.3	22.0	17.3	13.2	19.1	50.4
Vocational lectures	1673	7.5	47.2	49.0	41.1	21.0	22.2	15.7	11.3	8.8	15.0	64.9
Vocational teachers of LM	489	9.8	40.4	49.6	0	11.8	42.7	45.3	13	18.2	24.3	44.3
Total	4777	6.9	56.3	36.8	28.2	23.0	26.6	22.3	14.8	12.2	18.2	54.9

Basic formal statistical data on vocational and didactical education of vocational pedagogues in Lithuania**Table 2**

Category of vocational pedagogue	Total	Vocational education level							Didactical education level					
		Without sec. (%)	Secondary (%)	High (%)	Bachelor (%)	Certificated special. (%)	Master (%)	Doctor (%)	None (%)	High (%)	Bachelor (%)	Certificated special. (%)	Master (%)	Doctor (%)
Vocational teachers	2615	0	9.2	42.6	0.4	46.2	1.5	0.07	87.6	2.9	0.2	8.3	0.96	0
Vocational lectures	1673	0	0.18	5.98	1.5	87.98	2.9	1.5	57.6	1.5	0.5	37.96	2.1	0.36
Vocational teachers of LM	489	0	14.5	20.3	0.8	61.1	1.8	1.4	78.3	0.6	0	18.8	1.4	0.8
Total	4777	0	6.6	27.5	0.82	62.34	2.0	0.7	76.2	2.8	0.27	19.78	1.4	0.2

Lithuanian vocational pedagogues was investigated, with confirmation by relevant documents. The formal statistical data was collected taking into account:

- the vocational education level of vocational teachers and lecturers;
- the didactical education level of vocational teachers and lecturers;
- general data (age, working experience in a vocational field, pedagogical experience) of vocational teachers and lecturers.

All these parameters are significant in forming a picture of Lithuanian vocational teachers and indicating their main initial and continuing professional development needs.

The research data covers 4777 vocational teachers in Lithuania including 2615 vocational teachers in secondary vocational schools, 1673 vocational lecturers in higher VET schools currently being converted to VET colleges or VET schools and 489 vocation-

al teachers working in labour market training centres. The main difference between VET teachers working in VET schools and VET teachers working in labour market training centres is in different needs in didactical education: the first mainly use pedagogy, the second andragogy (adult education theory).

The detailed results are presented in tables 1 and 2. The average age of vocational teachers and lecturers (Table 1) is 31 to 50 years old (56.32 %). The majority (62.34 %) are certificated specialists in their vocational field (Table 2). In contrast, 76.2 % of vocational pedagogues do not actually have a formal didactical background (Figure 1), but approximately 70 % (18.2 % + 54.9 %) have pedagogical work experience exceeding 10 years (see also Annexes I, II, III, IV and V).

The conclusion could be drawn (Figure 1) that acquisition of didactical qualification is the most urgent need for vocational teachers in Lithuania. However, about 70 % have



more than 10 years pedagogical work experience in VET school, college or labour market-training centres. This suggests that a significant number already have didactical competences that reflect pedagogical qualification. Therefore, acquisition of didactical qualification could be organised in two ways: first, via initial pedagogical training courses and, second, via assessment of prior learning achievements. The second alternative could save financial and time resources of both the State (employer) and teacher. The current state of vocational teacher qualifications in Lithuania emphasises the acquisition of didactical qualification; this has been translated into the development of Lithuanian vocational teacher education and training conception.

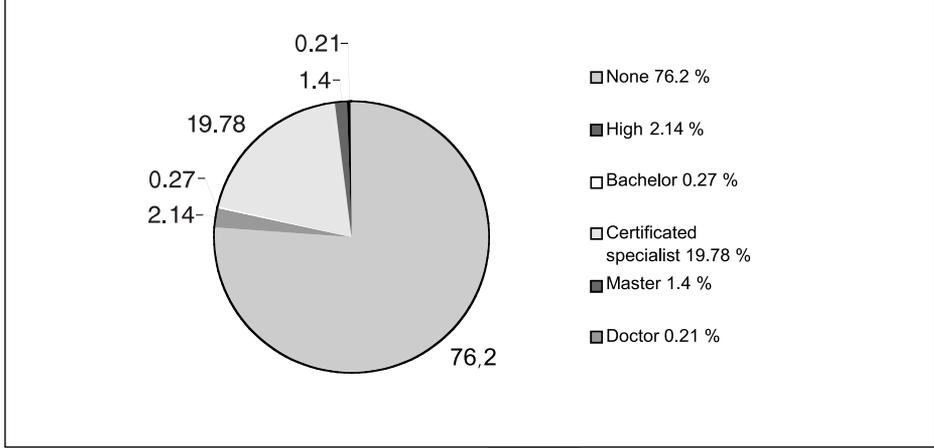
Main actors in competence-based vocational teacher education

Pedagogical (didactical and vocational) education and training of vocational teachers takes place in universities or other higher pedagogical or vocational educational institutions, so indicating the main purpose of such education, didactical or vocational theoretical knowledge leading to appropriate theoretical pedagogical thinking. It also takes place in vocational schools or colleges, where the main focus is on practical teaching/learning competences, leading to appropriate practical pedagogical thinking. Universities mainly provide theoretical pedagogical study, allowing vocational teacher students to acquire theoretical pedagogical knowledge, a background of pedagogical thinking for educational problem-solving. Vocational schools or colleges promote practical pedagogical studies for students in a real pedagogical environment, developing the practical teaching/learning skills of future vocational teachers. During theoretical and practical studies, the future teacher faces various teaching and learning problems. He/she is not able to solve all of them independently as his/her pedagogical experience is insufficient. Therefore, the support of other participants in vocational teacher education and training is important to the efficiency of pedagogical studies and their quality.

The main actors in vocational teacher education and training are university and VET college lecturers and tutors and mentors and future vocational teachers already working in VET school. Table 3 details vocational teacher education and training participants,

Formal level of didactical education of vocational pedagogues of Lithuania (%)

Figure 1



their activities and activity content (omitting VET school students).

The functions of a lecturer in university and other higher schools are participation in vocational teacher training, and realising theoretical study aims (conveying pedagogical knowledge, development of pedagogically valuable approaches and attitudes, theoretical pedagogical thinking elements, etc.) during lectures, seminars and other activities.

The functions of a tutor (Great Britain) or a university supervisor (the USA and other countries) are also performed by university or other higher school lecturers. However, they, differ from university lecturers in having concrete didactical and managerial responsibilities with regard to vocational teacher education and training. For instance, a tutor participates in designing, planning and evaluating vocational teacher education and training programmes, and examines practical studies guided by mentors in accordance with vocational teacher education and training programme objectives (Rozemond, 2000; Frits, 2000). This includes: supervision; instructing future vocational teachers through distance coaching; visiting future VET teachers at schools; discussing the achieved outcomes together with them and with mentors; coaching on planning further learning objectives; and cooperating with mentors to guarantee a close interaction between theoretical and practical studies. Therefore, practical pedagogical studies demand cooperation between vocational school and university or any other higher school.



The main actors of vocational teacher pedagogical education and training Table 3

Participants	Activity	Activity content
Lecturers	Theoretical education of vocational teachers	Analyses of lectures, seminars, teaching/learning skills practicums, designing of subject (module) content, organising the independent work of vocational teacher students, planning of study process, teaching of subject, assessing and evaluating achieved study results, evaluation of teaching subject (module) content, lecturing, improvement of study content and methods.
Tutors	Participation in designing the modular programmes for vocational teacher education and training, theoretical vocational teacher education and supervision of practical realisation of theoretical study objectives by distance coaching	Act as lecturers, take part in designing and planning vocational teacher education and training programmes, observe the future vocational teacher theoretical and practical activities, participate in discussions with future VET teachers and mentors, encourage future vocational teachers by providing advice and consultations, maintain their study motivation, evaluate achievement, provide feedback by distance coaching, evaluate vocational teacher education and training programmes with regard to responses from programme participants.
Vocational teacher students	Theoretical and practical pedagogical studies	Study theoretical subjects or modules, perform direct teaching practice in vocational school or college, observe teaching/learning process and its elements, participate in discussions with lecturers, tutors, mentors and colleagues, plan teaching/learning activities, reflect their own and colleagues' teaching activities, reflectively evaluate feedback received from tutor, mentor, colleagues, learners, their parents and social partners.
Mentors	Working guidance assisting vocational teacher student to acquire practical pedagogical skills by direct coaching	Meeting future vocational teachers carrying out practical training, discuss strategy of pedagogical practice by working guidance, together formulate the main aims and objectives of pedagogical practice, develop pedagogical practice and working guidance plans, guide pedagogical practice, coach, observe vocational teacher student activity in the classroom, school, enterprises and meetings with parents, assess achievements, interpret them and provide feedback, assist in solving various pedagogical problems, foster and maintain pedagogical activity motivation by direct coaching, support VET teacher student becoming a member of VET school community and understanding its organisational culture.

to comply with pedagogical ethics, be creative, tolerant, emphatic, etc. He/she has to be able to take advantage of information technology possibilities, develop teaching/learning content, prepare teaching/learning materials, participate in project work (plan, implement, evaluate, adjust), organise team work, apply active teaching/learning methods and various coaching methods, prepare meetings for future VET teachers, create an agreement for cooperation, be able to communicate and interpret, provide feedback, advise, know how to carry out acts of pedagogical intervention, investigate needs, observe, develop counselling skills in researching and identifying practical situations and finding optimal solutions, apply various pedagogical methods to make VET teacher education and training more effective.

During practical pedagogical studies, there is interaction between the tutor (who inspects or carries out the function of supervision), the mentor (who guides the practical activity of the future vocational teacher), the vocational teacher student (who performs practical pedagogical tasks) and the VET school student. The nature of interaction is determined by practical pedagogical study aims and objectives. Its effectiveness depends on the competence and motivation of the participants. As research indicates, the majority of problems arise with the most important agent of practical pedagogical studies, the mentor. The problems can be caused by many factors: competence, interest and motivation, pedagogical approach and attitudes, experience, financial issues, etc. According to Christensen (1988), who investigated the interaction between future teachers, tutors and mentors, communication between future teachers and tutors is a partnership of equals. An evaluative approach prevails in commenting upon lessons and other pedagogical tasks: pedagogical errors and difficulties are analysed, conclusions drawn, strategy and tactics of pedagogical practice are formulated, independent thinking is fostered, problem-solving solutions are foreseen. The interaction between future teachers and mentors is of a different nature. The mentor predominates in the discussions, which are limited to reviewing events and student learning activity. Directive conclusions prevail and future vocational teachers are appointed tasks for future activity, usually without justification.

A mentor (associated teacher, clinical instructor, cooperative teacher) normally is an experienced vocational teacher (Mentor Training in Vocational Training, 1998), who helps a future VET teacher during practical studies to convert theoretical knowledge to practical teaching/learning skills, understand better the peculiarities of VET teacher activities and assists him or her to 'grow into' the school organisational culture. The major mentor activity in future vocational teacher or lecturer pedagogical practice is working guidance (Klenke and Kruger, 2000). The mentor has to be a strong personality, to believe in the significance of pedagogical work,



Ben-Peretz and Rumney (1991) state that, in Israel, interaction between future teachers and mentors is usually of an evaluative nature. Future teachers are rarely provided with suggestions or alternatives for their activity. In contrast, discussions with tutors are similar to the ones described by Christensen (1988). Koerner (1992) researched the causes of the communication shortcomings between future teachers and mentors. It was discovered that mentors - experienced teachers - feel irritated because future teachers disturb their usual working pace, make them waste their time, and hinder their concentration on their own work problems. Experienced teachers are concerned when future teachers bring various ideas from a university or other higher educational institution to school, ideas that purportedly do not correspond to the real life, stereotypes of their activity or even contradict them. Consequently, choosing appropriate experienced teachers to carry out the mentor functions, and proper mentor preparation, has become a very important factor in vocational teacher training, based on the acquisition of practical pedagogical competences.

Leavitt (1991) states that contradictions between tutors and mentors arise from different understanding of practical pedagogical study aims by theoreticians at universities and practitioners at schools. Therefore, tutor and mentor pedagogical communication and cooperation is an important factor in practical pedagogical study development. One of the most important issues in their cooperation is training experienced teachers to perform mentor functions and manage their further communication in the process of vocational teacher education. Such a mentor training programme is already in practice and is supported by the Ministry of Education and Science.

Summarising above:

- the EU Memorandum on Lifelong Learning (2000) made clear the importance of education as a main driving force in long-term human resource development, which could make Europe more competitive in the world.
- the acquisition of pedagogical qualification is the most urgent need for vocational teachers in Lithuania since more than 70 % of them do not have any pedagogical background. However, about 70 % of vocational pedagogues have more than ten years

pedagogical work experience in VET school, college or labour market-training centres. Hence, creating a prior learning assessment methodology is a very urgent and useful tool to save state and client (VET teachers without pedagogical qualification) financial and time resources.

The main new challenges for VET teacher education and training are:

- change of stereotypes of pedagogical behaviour of VET teachers from teacher-centred to student-centred approach;
- change of VET school into a learning organisation;
- integrating the future workplace into vocational teacher student education and training or close interaction of theoretical and practical studies in VET teacher education and training;
- change in curriculum design from a curriculum built on separate vocational subjects to one built on integrated modules targeted to concrete competences;
- turning the vocational teacher/lecturer to a networker across school boundaries;
- turning the VET teacher from a reflective practitioner to a small scale research practitioner;

The main actors of competence-based vocational teacher education and training are lecturer, tutor, VET school mentor and vocational teacher student of a university or other higher pedagogical institution, who already work in VET school or college. The success of vocational teacher education and training depends on the quality of interaction between tutor, mentor and vocational teacher student.

The European dimension of developing VET teacher education

The above theoretical and empirical findings lead VET researchers, politicians and practitioners to believe that the most appropriate approach for Lithuania could be a competence-based model of VET teacher education. This also enables Lithuanian VET politicians to seek appropriate international support to develop a new VET teacher education system. In the Soviet occupation



period, a parallel model of VET teacher education prevailed. It was fragmented, too academically and theoretically orientated; it did not fit into the frame of today's market economy and is unable to satisfy labour market demands.

From the beginning of independence (1990), many attempts were made to analyse the experience of VET teacher education in different western countries and in Lithuania (Dienys and Pusvaskis, 1998; White paper: vocational education, 1999; Laužackas, 1999; Pukelis, 1999; Laužackas and Pukelis, 1998; Kucinskas and Kucinskiene, 2000, and others). These theoretical surveys and empirical research exercises came to the conclusion that teaching is based on the practical awareness of VET teachers of how to act in different teaching/learning situations. The consecutive and competence-based VET teacher education model was chosen as the basis for development of VET teacher education as the one best responding to the development of the Lithuania VET system.

In 1997, Vytautas Magnus University (Kauņas, LT) together with Sheffield Hallam University (UK) in the PHARE VET'97 project, started development of a modular programme for initial VET teacher education. The result was a one year modular programme for initial VET teacher education composed from 12 modules targeted at the most important competences necessary to acquire pedagogical qualification for VET teachers. The 12 books for teachers and 12 books for learners in this programme gave a description of programme with requirements for its implementation. A group of VET tutors was trained and then piloted their own modules in a one-year modular programme for initial VET teacher education. Together with the tutors were working mentors - experienced VET teachers - who played a key role in competence-based VET teacher education. The first group of mentors was trained in 1998 in a bilateral Lithuanian (Vytautas Magnus University) and Norwegian (Akershus University College) project. One of the results of this project was a published book for developing mentor counselling skills (*Learning and counselling*, 2002) in English (2002) and Lithuanian (2003).

In 1998, an international Leonardo da Vinci project, *Systematic organisation of continuing development of VET personnel*, (1998-

2000), started with close cooperation from partners in Denmark, Germany and Holland. This project also reached the conclusion that competence-based VET teacher education is most relevant to today's labour market challenges. The framework of the VET teacher education professional standard (2002) was designed based on lifelong learning and competences which VET teachers must possess to be able successfully to compete in the labour market.

The competence-based VET teacher education approach was also proved in another international donor cooperation project from the European Training Foundation (ETF), Denmark and Finland. *Reshaping the focus and structure of teacher/trainer training (TTT) in Lithuania and Latvia* (1999-2002) was coordinated by Vytautas Magnus university, where the proposal for vocational teacher education and training in Lithuania was developed (Laužackas, Pukelis and Pundziene, 2002) and the VET teacher professional standard was corrected according to the learning needs of a lifelong learning perspective of continuing professional development. The horizontal VET teacher career path was designed on the basis of different concrete competences needed at separate stages of professional development. The objectives and learning outcomes of the PHARE VET'97 modular programme were adjusted in line with the corrected professional standard for vocational teachers. The mentor training programme was developed, the first group of mentor educators prepared and a second group trained. The mentor's book was published as a handbook for those working in the initial modular programme. Regulation for initial pedagogical education and training of vocational teachers/lecturers was developed (2002). All these documents were accepted and confirmed by the Collegium of Vocational Education and Training at the Ministry of Education and Science. The result of these political decisions was allocation of appropriate funds by the Ministry of Education and Science (MoES) to start practical implementation of initial vocational teacher education and training. The first group of 32 VET teachers successfully finished the modular programme for initial VET teacher education in April of 2004 and a third group of mentors was trained in 2003 using only national intellectual and financial resources. A second group of VET teachers are in the process. The systematic ap-



proach to international support for development of VET teacher education in Lithuania is presented in Figure 2 (CAT - change agent team).

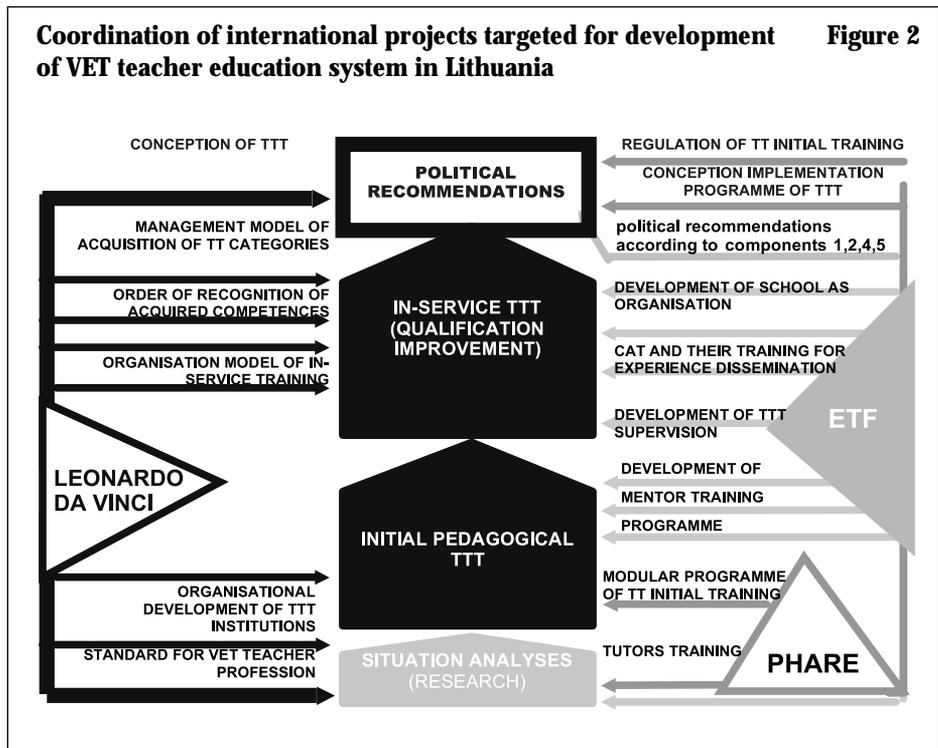
However, Lithuanian financial and intellectual resources are still not sufficient to cover demand for didactical education of VET teachers. Using European Union structural funds could be a good way of satisfying this demand. Continuing professional development of vocational VET teachers is currently covered by expert groups from economic sectors (EGEB) and includes the design of VET teacher education standards in the relevant vocational subject.

Vocational teacher education and training strategy in Lithuania

The national strategy for pedagogical education and training of Lithuanian vocational teachers was developed on the basis of specific approaches:

- ❑ integrating theoretical and practical studies at the vocational teacher’s workplace (work and learning integration at workplace) or close interaction between university (or higher school) and VET school, since previous VET teacher education was too academic;
- ❑ turning VET schools into learning organisations to enhance organisational development within schools from ‘vertical’ to ‘horizontal’ structure, converting VET schools to university equal partners;
- ❑ implementing action reflection learning via modernisation of teaching/learning methods to enhance independent student learning activity;
- ❑ opening up VET schools to the world of work, emphasising close cooperation with the social partners and building up national and international networks among all institutions and key actors involved in vocational teacher education.

The principles of VET teacher education and training are formulated according to the peculiarities of political, economic, social, cultural and curriculum, organisational and personal factors and possibilities of their interaction. VET teacher education and training in Lithuania adheres to the following principles:



- ❑ decentralisation, meaning that all teachers have access to education and training with regard to development of pedagogical qualification needs, regional choice and other aspects; possibilities for formal, non-formal and informal learning, involvement of broad range of vocational institutions;
- ❑ openness, meaning coordination of individual and labour market needs, learning accessibility, coherence of initial and in-service training, qualification demand and supply at national and international levels, interests of social partners and other social groups, financial and other resources, general, academic and vocational education;
- ❑ systematisation, meaning that the system of VET teacher education and training guarantees the conditions for lifelong learning and gradual acquisition of the qualification categories and possibilities for professional development;
- ❑ compatibility, meaning that the system of VET teacher education and training is constantly renewed and changed to satisfy the demands of the world of work, the educational system and teacher continuing professional development needs, so that when they choose VET teaching as a profession, they can acquire and constantly upgrade their vocational and didactical qualification;



□ cooperation, emphasising the demands of different interest groups of VET teachers in planning and organising their continuing professional development needs with regard to different competences of participants. Cooperation assures vertical and horizontal links among the different institutions of VET teacher education and training and relations with the social partners, schools, governmental and non-governmental organisations, partners for international projects;

□ particularity, highlighting the singularity of VET teacher education and training principles, organisation and content in comparison with other types of teacher education. The fact that there is a great variety of VET programmes and demand for a small number of VET teachers (in Lithuania) in different vocational subject fields are given consideration. General conformity and national peculiarity are considered in the international context.

The main parameters of vocational teacher education and training are:

- a professional standard for VET teachers;
- a consecutive model for VET teacher education and training;
- a curriculum of initial and continuing pedagogical development based on professional standard for VET teachers.

The professional standard for VET teachers was developed on the basis of lifelong learning and covers a complete horizontal career path encompassing five vocational teacher qualification categories: junior vocational teacher, vocational teacher, senior vocational teacher, vocational teacher methodologist, vocational teacher expert. The VET teacher professional standard describes the goals, the main fields of activities and didactical competences of each VET teacher qualification category (Professional standard for vocational teacher/lecturer, 2002). The standard is the basis for planning, implementing and evaluating the curriculum of VET teacher education and training. The didactical competences defined in the standard are divided into five areas:

- personnel development competences;
- planning of module curriculum, teaching and development competences;

□ vocational teaching programme design competences;

□ school and educational system development competences;

□ vocational subject development competences.

The standard describes didactical competences related to the first four areas, divided according to qualification categories for vocational teachers. The fifth area of competences is not described in the standard since it is related to various vocations. Their descriptions are under development by various expert groups of economy branches (EGEB). Moreover, this part of vocational teacher qualification, taking into account the rapid development of science and technology, is undergoing continual change and therefore must be under continuous development and improvement.

The consecutive model of vocational teacher education and training includes four consistent stages (Figure 3). In the first stage (this is more desirable than compulsory) a prospective vocational teacher finishes vocational school, acquiring the first vocational qualification targeted to the concrete labour market needs (it takes from two to three years). In the second stage, the prospective vocational teacher acquires a higher vocational qualification (this takes from three to six years). In the third stage, the prospective vocational teacher obtains a minimum three-year practical work experience in the field of the acquired vocational qualification. At the fourth stage, the vocational teacher begins to work in the same vocational programme of VET school, which corresponds with his/her vocational qualification. During the first two years of work in VET school, he or she acquires didactical and complete pedagogical qualification. This covers only the fourth stage; the fifth stage illustrates continuing professional development based on lifelong learning. In the sixth stage, the vocational teacher could graduate from a master's, and later doctoral, programme, acquiring higher professional or researcher qualifications.

The curriculum for initial didactical training of VET teachers is based on the competences of a vocational teacher qualification as described in the standard. This qualification level is obligatory and enables the teacher



or lecturer to undertake independent work in school. The curriculum refers to an equivalent combination of theoretical and practical studies in higher school and development of practical pedagogical skills in VET school. It reflects the present educational level of VET teachers, concrete didactical competences and accessibility of studies (taking into account place and time of studies), and active involvement of employers and other social partners in planning, implementing and evaluating the curriculum. The tutor and mentor roles are crucial.

Evaluation of the achievements of initial pedagogical training is based on the portfolio principle, creating prerequisites for accrediting competences already possessed. The final assessment of the achievements of an individual VET teacher student is accomplished by summarising the results of the portfolio, the experimental lesson and the final work.

The curriculum for in-service education and training of VET teachers depends on scientific, technological and pedagogical innovations, plus the acquisition of competences targeted to higher vocational teacher category and to individual needs or interests. Hence, there could be three types of module for in-service VET teacher education and training:

- curriculum for developing strategic competences that correspond to the latest strategic scientific and practical innovations;
- curriculum for developing competences necessary for achieving higher qualification categories, described in the VET teacher professional standard;
- curriculum for developing individual competences, which indicates the VET institution or teachers' personal development needs.

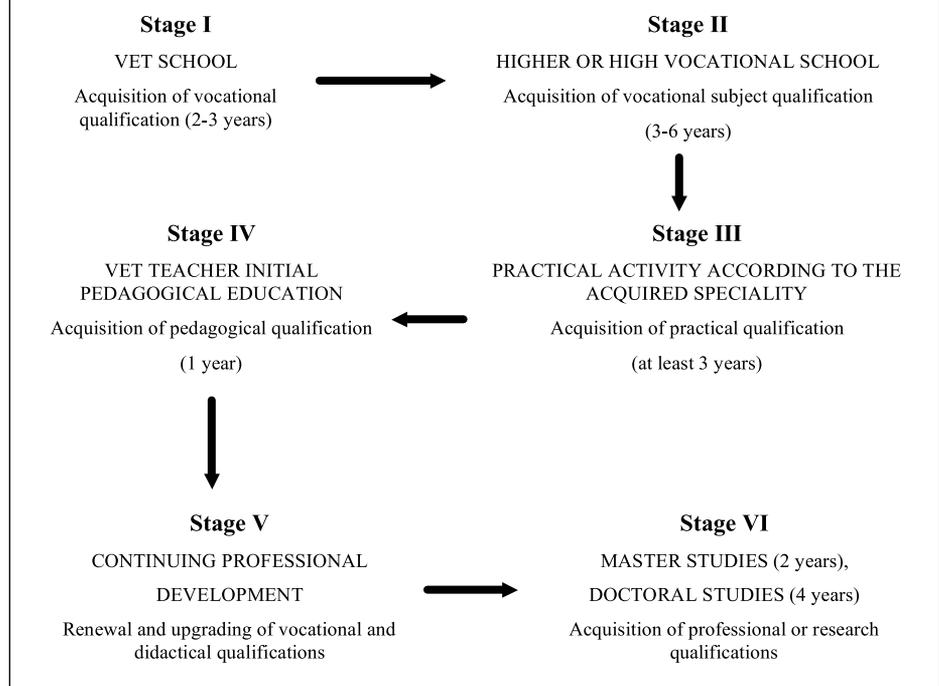
Conclusions

VET teacher education and training in Lithuania adhere to the principles of decentralisation, openness, systematisation, compatibility, cooperation and particularity.

The main parameters of VET teacher education and training are a professional standard for the VET teacher, a consecutive mod-

General scheme for vocational teacher education and training in Lithuania

Figure 3



el for VET teacher education and training, and a curriculum for initial and in-service didactical education based on the professional standard.

The Lithuanian strategy for vocational teacher education and training is also based on other documents, such as the Regulation for initial pedagogical education and training of vocational teachers, Action plan for implementation of strategy of vocational teacher education and training, etc., approved by the Ministry of Education and Science.

A crucial role in more effective VET teacher and vocational education lies in developing prior non-formal and informal learning assessment methodology, and tools targeted to measure concrete competences indicated in the VET teacher professional standard.

The Lithuanian VET teacher education strategy, using a consecutive and competence-based model as a result of a series international projects, has the main documents, intellectual and human resources needed to begin work on didactical education. However, practical implementation in the VET system development still lacks financial resources. Appropriate use of structural funds could increase the level of practical implementation.



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Key words

Vocational education,
teacher training,
standard,
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ANNEXES

