

Economics

Problems and Solutions in Vocational Education and Training in Georgia

Revaz Nakashidze

Vocational Training Centre, Batumi

(Presented by Academy Member Leo Chikava)

ABSTRACT. The world practice shows that the labor market is oriented to high qualification. Those who have prestigious professions and relevant qualification have greater chances for social self-realization. In conditions of market economy the price of such a labor force is significantly increasing. Therefore, in conditions of free competitive system the problem of vocational training, retraining and raising the level of qualification of the labor force is especially important. Educational system should be focused to prepare the young people for future challenges to cope and use them for social benefit. In conditions of modern piece of scientific and technical progress the goal of lifelong learning is adaptation to dynamic life and professional mobility of a person. © 2013 Bull. Georg. Natl. Acad. Sci.

Key words: vocational education.

The system of modern vocational education and training with its stages of education and the educational objectives for adults is a special social institution with its specific forms of work, methods, objectives and prospects of development for each level. For the last ten years the problem of adult educational potential has been widely discussed throughout the world. New jobs appeared. There are some interesting approaches with their content and prospects accepted by a number of international conferences [1].

One of the principal ideas of modern conceptions of lifelong learning is the demand for bringing up young people adapted to the dynamic changes of life. Educational system should be focused to prepare the young people for future challenges to cope

and use them for social benefit. In conditions of modern piece of scientific and technical progress the goal of lifelong learning is adaptation to dynamic life and professional mobility of a person.

A modern individual as a professional is not just a performer of the labor process but organizes the process himself and can make operative decisions being able to correct his/her own behavior as well as production process and capable of quick adaptation in uncommon circumstances. All this requires not only fundamental professional training, but also a high-level psychological preparation and extensive range of knowledge. Solution of such an important public problem is possible only by means of a lifelong educational system organized in accordance with modern requirements.

However, the crisis in educational system in recent two decades aggravates the situation. It has been especially fatal for primary vocational schools. The decrease of production potential, closedown of factories, labor market failure caused by economical crisis significantly decreased the demand on qualified labor. The system of vocational-technical training was destroyed.

In the early 90s of the last century there were about 200 primary vocational schools and 86 secondary vocational schools in Georgia. In 2000 their number halved. The contingent decreased drastically. Accordingly, the full-time jobs disappeared and the best specialists became unemployed. Due to complete disorder and confusion in 1998 the primary vocational schools were left without financing.

Many rash decisions made due to reorganization and optimization of schools were soon found to be thoughtless, while others served subjective interests. Ultimately, the number of liquidated schools exceeded 80%. The schools were closed on the basis of the primary vocational training system liquidation scheme accepted by the Ministry of Education motivated by the fact that vocational school graduates filled the ranks of unemployed labor. Unfortunately, the destiny of vocational education was in the hands of people and political groups who did not completely understand the system. They pretended to be reformers but did not have enough mobilization for the procedures and their outcomes.

The processes of issuing the guidelines, orders and instructions were reduced. Lacking the legal basis for independent operation, the schools were found in an unfavorable situation.

The rich technical-material basis, inventories and equipment, expensive machine tools and installations were destroyed in schools. Traditional relations with production companies, factories, public organizations, vertical and horizontal contacts with other institutions were broken. The internal and external integration processes could not be controlled. The encouragement system was not retained either. On

the contrary, age limit was estimated and the solvent students were prioritized. The data of 2006, according to which 75-80% of primary vocational school students were from poor or single-parent families, we could observe a quite unfavorable situation. We were at variance with the national constitution, with the laws of primary vocational education and employment (social security of citizens). The constitutional right of citizens, the principle of free primary vocational education and its universal accessibility has been violated [2,3].

Although there were certain attempts of optimization and orientation to efficiency and international standards, in most cases drastic changes and total rejection of own traditions and demands had a negative result: under the government resolution #150, August 2005, according to the conception on vocational education, the Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia decided to take out the general educational subjects from the program of legal entity of public law – the vocational educational institutions. Accordingly, the reorganization processes were carried out drastically decreasing the number of students at schools, a great number of teachers of general educational subjects were dismissed. In fact, a couple of teachers were maintained who could not provide even minimum satisfaction of demands on training qualified individuals according to modern standards either by means of long-term programs, or by means of short-term courses of professional retraining and professional development.

Any school that cannot cope with its task should be closed down but it seems illogical to liquidate the only school existing in the region or district. As the experience of foreign countries shows, whatever difficulty could be, functioning of schools had to be supported. According to the computations of competent experts training of the personnel employed to transfer the country to economic innovations should meet the level of high qualification. Besides, existence of the schools was significant for a city, district or any big settlement because it increased its status.

It is also very important for stable demography of the region taking into account that it can be effectively used in cultural, sport and different public events.

Although the number of private schools is increasing their capacity and profiles are limited. Most of the individuals willing to receive qualification cannot afford the tuition. Considerable part of comprehensive secondary school graduates lack the opportunity to acquire the desirable profession. They either begin working without any qualification or fill the ranks of unemployed labor.

The situation is becoming worrying. The labor market is full of our cheap and uncompetitive citizens. Some of them are forced to look for a job abroad ready to work as an aide or take on hard physical work to earn living. The number of victims of disappointment and failure is great. Part of them are easily influenced by the criminal world and cause great concerns, problems and damage to the country.

The words of a prominent Russian pedagogue Ushinski are still topical: "One of the reasons why the trade schools are worth opening is that it will prevent the hospitals and prisons to be filled with those who can be well trained in the trade schools to avoid the hospitals and prisons. Nation should think of crime prevention rather than punishment, should do its best for moral education and good vocational training" [4].

In modern educational world the vertical and horizontal coordination among the schools and institutions has weakened to some extent. In many cases the innovation processes obtained a partial character. Uncritical approach to western experience and globalization, and underestimation of own achievements (if any) immediately showed itself. The level and quality of knowledge did not rise. The teachers' authority and respect decreased and no discipline was maintained. The function of punishment and encouragement was taken over by the police representatives – resource officers. The role of the tutor, teacher, psychologist and the caretaker moved to the background.

Distrust of educational programs is growing and private tutors have become the primary factor for sustainable knowledge. Majority of students try to supplement and consolidate their knowledge (in the same subjects that are taught at school) beyond the school with private tutors.

In 2012 a sample survey carried out in Adjarian schools showed that 80% of city schoolchildren and 55% of rural schoolchildren enjoyed the service of private tutors. And all the university applicants do the same. A similar tendency is observed in vocational schools as well. Seeking the ways of achieving a better level of knowledge and practical skills, the students of vocational schools refer to qualified specialists and foremost workers. Vocational training has been brought into the forefront.

We must persuade every member of society that knowledge and vocational skills are the drivers to success in life. Unfortunately, negative attitude to some professions is often caused by lack of information. Some people do not sufficiently understand the public significance of their profession and are not aware of relevant legislative and normative acts or if they are, their awareness is superficial and incomplete.

One of the greatest defects of reform is the fact that the policy carried out in the vocational educational system is not quite clear for the major part of society. There is some uncertainty and fear of changes. Very often the projects are not the subject of public discussion. In many cases the projects and decisions are not specified and clear. Their driving mechanisms and the obligations of those responsible for their implementation are not specified and the rash actions are ineffective and sometimes even become an obstacle.

The vocational education standards must provide close links between vocational training and economic sectors, especially in those fields where an individual can be employed after proper training. Besides, it should be taken into account that it is necessary to have a uniform approach to the voca-

tional education standards for different countries, which will ensure to issue certified diplomas [5].

Today a professional is required to know such subjects that were disregarded earlier: professional psychology, ethics, aesthetics, public relations, sociability etc. Training programs must provide to establish the methods directed to qualified professionals and to prepare quality training of students, to raise the level of specific and general knowledge. National mentality and character should be taken into account more extensively. To this end the handbooks, methodology, professional magazines, newspapers and periodicals should be more interesting and attractive. The role of specific or situational examples is great for the individuals to adapt to the educational vocational environment and to achieve success, to evaluate personal abilities and skills. It is important to understand that with his/her vocation he/she does the job which he/she is required to and which will be appreciated.

In conditions of present stressful life knowledge is a great power protecting one from many negative phenomena and provides better prospects for coping with the problems of everyday life.

The teachers, psychologists and doctors consider alcohol, narcomania, unemployment, inaccessible education, stress etc, to be the unhealthy way of life. Against the background of poverty these factors have become topical in Georgia. It should be noted that in many well-developed countries these problems are confronted by prolonged vocational training. It is better to make them busy with useful work to avoid problems.

Nowadays, any event occurring in any part of the world immediately spreads and becomes familiar to everyone. Different countries have one and the same interests. Soon we will settle in cosmos. The demand for professionalism is continuously growing and becomes respectful. The importance of international standards is increasing. The role of a qualified worker and a blue-collar workers greatly differ. The example of a well-known disaster at the

Chernobyl Nuclear Power Plant clearly shows what can happen due to ignorance or imperfect qualification and irresponsibility. As a special investigative commission estimated, the explosion occurred due to the personnel incompetence and the reactor malfunctioning.

Management of modern equipment and technologies and, accordingly, national development and progress will depend upon the knowledge and diligence of well-trained personnel. The new Government of Georgia has begun working on new projects of socio-economic development. Some new prospects of development have appeared in industry, agriculture, construction, service sector with new characteristics. A billion laris investment in agriculture implies to provide different specialists for agriculture, qualified farmers, information, consultancy, introduction of modern equipment and technologies, service etc.

The goal of the present educational system, family and community is to teach the citizens and especially young people to work and enjoy the fruits of their labor, to develop young people in the positive social direction. Every day it becomes necessary to have such programs and projects based on appropriate researches to take their interests into account. The processes are quite rapid. Number of government and social groups suggest versatile projects of social and vocational development of individuals. They must be carried out in every community of the cities and regions with account of local specifics and support. Such programs bring great effect and benefit. In developed countries great deal of the funds provided for education is spent on financing the social projects and activities (about 10-12% in USA). In the outcomes and conclusions of the programs their academic evaluation, personal development processes, social status, improvement of emotional state and stability are of interest.

The projects should meet the needs of the local population, should be interesting, interactive, thematically outlined and clearly formulated, having

positive influence on their emotions and perception, especially on the young people. The guarantee of better quality in educational system and better orientation in personal life will be organization of special groups according to their interests. For parents it means effective search of way for future life of their children, for the community it is training of the generation busy with useful programs, crime prevention and for businessmen it means to be provided with well-trained, hard-working, well-organized personnel equipped with special skills. That is why in developed countries businessmen are always ready to provide considerable commercial and financial support for schools.

Individuals should be equipped with such a knowledge that they were able to support themselves, to create opportunity and to stimulate themselves in order to escape the others' support and hesitation, to become independent, perfect and successful citizens. It is the essence of the educational reform – knowledge, ambition, work and energy opens the way for active search.

People need the foundations of knowledge that will allow them successfully to develop their vital principles. Narrow knowledge of some special subjects is not sufficient for them, narrow range of orientation is not an end in itself. They must comprehend what will be the result of their choice with respect to their well-being, at service of the nation and the public, where its place will be.

The latest national educational programs should be able to train professionals oriented to competitive environment. The united educational system as the basis for lifelong education comprises preschool, school and after-school education, within which the educational institutions are coordinated. The united educational system must have a strong foundation to bear the fruitful educational strategy of vocational institutions, which will be secure from the threat of previous monotony and reaching a deadlock.

Vocational training should take over the responsibility for developing a new way of thinking meeting

modern requirements. Progress can be achieved by seeking the effective ways of teaching, by open teaching, well-organized practical lessons, active involvement in different projects and training of vocational personnel striving for entrepreneurship. Small projects carried out at schools will intensify orientation to the environment. Facilitation of an enterprise on a school basis requires serious work and generalization.

For many people, self-employment is still the only way of surviving giving them at least some income. Nowadays main ways of self-employment is trade (in the streets, home delivery), personal services (beauty saloons, tailor's service, illegal labor markets, private hiring, shoe repair, small enterprises; in rural places – gardening, vegetable growing, workmanship, craft industry, etc.). Very often those processes are unstable and the people experience lack of learned skills of managing their business. The use if that potential, its legalization and knowledge improvement will increase the employment culture and service quality. It is important to consider the prospects of education and skill training in people living below poverty level and other people of similar category: it is necessary to give them the opportunity of active life, to help them to realize their abilities and seek a vocation in order to survive and serve the nation.

In conditions of modern globalization the topical question is not to cut our roots, but retain our dignity, national traditions and identity and at the same time live and work in a European style, combine our best features with theirs opening the door to European civilization with more interest. Countries with strong traditions (Germany, Japan, Korea) do not lose balance even in extreme situations. Despite the wars and destruction they are progressing quickly trying to master everything that is good and beautiful in modern civilization. They lay the foundation for that at school.

At present there is a rapid process of integration and internationalization in education. Different organizations are being formed in support of

transnational foundations and vocational education providing exchange of experience and specialists as well as implementation of new technologies. It should be noted that these are very important processes creating an opportunity for close cooperation in vocational training for uniform approach to documentation, standardization and satisfaction of demands.

Along with the methodological support, material and technical as well as financial support is growing. In December 2011 Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) selected Georgia as a compact-eligible country for the next five years to support its economical development and poverty reduction. The priorities are the improvement of human capital especially elimination of deficit of qualified technical specialists and professionals as the main barrier in the way of continuous economic growth. For that purpose Georgia was provided a support of \$15 million. Such projects will reveal and support generalization of existing or prospective practices, rational distribution and spending of funds and will pave the way to innovations.

We need political, economic, social tranquility and stability in order to develop successful business, industry and agriculture, to create jobs for our people and to inspire them to gain higher qualification. Excessive number of refugees and ethnic conflicts complicates the situation. We need a special approach to them, to work out effective programs with clear objectives and oriented to efficient activities of retraining and requalification of different categories of population: young people, adults, unemployed, demobilized, women, disabled, IDPs and other socially vulnerable people.

The attitude of foreign counterparts to the processes going on in our country is noteworthy. Do we deserve enough trust and attention for further cooperation and support? Methodological advice of competent specialists and consultants, support of different teams and groups must prevent us from the same mistakes and failure we had. We must turn Georgia into a country of interests and opportunities.

The role of foreign countries is very important in

carrying out projects (Turkey, Ukraine, Italy, Germany, USA, Kazakhstan, Japan). Their businessmen invest serious funds in Georgian economy. All this calls for great demands on preparation of highly-qualified local workers. And we must be able to avoid invitation of expensive specialists.

Our country used to be wealthy, educated and proud. And now we must get it out of poverty. Unfortunately, by waiting for others support we show less interest development and revival of our own country. Some people got used to allowances and do not care for finding any jobs. There have never been so many spongers and beggars in the country. Begging in public places, transport, shops has become a profession for many and a stigma for us.

I think it is time to recall Soviet methods of “compulsory” work and ways of encouragement for the potential students of professional education. There are many stimulating tools such as scholarships, good living conditions, employment of the graduates, prospects of further study for better students, etc.

Farming is a new job in Georgia, so new qualification and skills are required for the farmers themselves as well as for the hired labor force who are the owners of small farms themselves. They are at the first stage of farming, gaining practical skills of management in conditions of own business and land ownership. In the transition period villages were destroyed especially in mountainous regions, therefore some traditional trades disappeared. Current processes require introduction of new knowledge and technologies in the content of educational standards.

Implementation of state standards of vocational training is an object of complex approach, which must make a breakthrough in functioning and improvement of Georgian vocational training. Therefore, coordinated action of educational workers with economists, sociologists, employers, labor market service providers, professional unions and scientists is necessary to formulate and systematize vocational training as the state demand. Under the constitution of Georgia, Govern-

ment provides compliance of educational programs with international norms and standards.

The society should consider vocational training school as necessary, familiar and essential. It must develop proper strategies to meet the demands of the educational and labor market as well as number of employers, to define strategic fields and directions identifying what kind of qualification is necessary and where. It must play a high-rated role carrying out specific projects, which will increase confidence in society and make them popular. In conditions of existing unstable and excessive labor resources qualified workers are in great demand. These processes require to equip the graduates of the vocational schools with such a level of general-educational, general-professional and psychological training that will allow them smoothly to adapt to the changes happening in social and industrial fields. "The system of vocational and technical education should be directed towards the study of life experience, which will be in close relation to economic, cultural and other factors of the surrounding world" [6].

Educational institutions with their profiles, goals and objectives should be turned into significant educational, economic and cultural centers of wide range, which must be aware of their objectives, capacities and expectations of the society. It should meet the interests of different institutions as a chain of "school-student (parent) –employer." To seek the optimal ways of teaching based on cooperation of school, students, teachers to work out an action plan on the principle of "learning and working, working and learning".

School has an important role in regional development, which must correctly answer its purpose, define its strategy and tactics, act with great responsibility and according to the newest standards in every section; with participation of its specialists and together with local municipalities, representatives of

community it must define nearest and long-term plans oriented to local conditions, the ways and methods of their realization. Such activities would advance the knowledge level in trainees, would help them to develop thinking and to increase the degree of their behavioral and social independence.

School reform paves the way for all kinds of educational institutions to form and develop into a multi-branch, multistage and multifunctional system. On their basis different educational departments and sections can be created for different periods and in different forms and direction such as short-term courses for advanced training and retraining as well as services for labor demand prediction and professional orientation. We will be able promptly to react to direct the redundant labor force in the necessary direction and to retrain them, being in close relationship with labor exchange, employment bureaus, other schools.

The essential requirement for employment is to know the basic elements of vocational training – mini-model of professional competence at least in one profession. And vocational training in a wide range of multi-modulated production learning and relevant skills provides better chance of employment and self-realization as well as better prospects for setting up own business.

It should be noted that the present tendency of secondary vocational training at the expense of comprehensive secondary schools reduction is the reason of low-competent individuals.

The guarantee of highly-productive work of professional educational centers is the successful use of resources and materials. Their activity is versatile hard work requiring serious amount of money and creation of a competitive environment which will be realized in maintaining own dignity and authority, would considerably increase aspiration and incentive to innovative processes.

*ეკონომიკა***საქართველოში პროფესიული განათლების
აქტუალური საკითხები****რ. ნაკაშიძე***პროფესიული განათლების ცენტრი, ბათუმი**(წარმოდგენილია აკადემიის წევრის ლ. ჩიქავას მიერ)*

პროფესიული განათლების მწვობრი სისტემის შექმნა, საკუთარი მოქალაქეების საფუძვლიანი პროფესიული მომზადების, კვალიფიკაციის მუდმივი ზრდისა და შრომის ბაზარზე კონკურენტუნარიანობის შენარჩუნების საიმედო დასაყრდენს წარმოადგენს. პროფესიონალიზმი მნიშვნელოვან ეკონომიკურ და სოციალურ სარგებელს იძლევა: პიროვნებისათვის - სოციალური დაცვის, თვითრეალიზებისა და თვითდამკვიდრების წარმატებულ შანსს; ქვეყნისათვის - სიმდიდრესა და სიძლიერის გარანტს. მაღალკვალიფიციური კადრების მომზადების ამოცანები სრულიად ახალ მიდგომას საჭიროებს საწარმო-ტექნოლოგიურ პროცესებსა და პროფესიათა მახასიათებლებში მომხდარი ცვლილებების, ახალი პროფესიების დანერგვის, კერძო მეწარმეობის, მცირე და საშუალო ბიზნესის განვითარებისათვის. წარმატებები პროფესიული განათლების სისტემის, ქვეყნის ერთიან საგანმანათლებლო და სოციალურ-ეკონომიკური განვითარებაში მოიაზრება. ყოველივე ეს სისტემური და სტრუქტურული ცვლილებების, რეგიონული განვითარების, სოციალური პარტნიორობის, მატერიალურ-ტექნიკური ბაზის განმტკიცებასა და შესაბამის ფინანსურ უზრუნველყოფას, ერთობლივ, ღრმად გააზრებულ, სტაბილურ მოქმედებას მოითხოვს.

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