

VET TEACHER TRAINING SYSTEM IN MONTENEGRO

I. BACKGROUND¹

Montenegro is a country of contrasts. Although classified as a Mediterranean country with the coastline of 293km, Montenegro is a typical mountainous region in which the zones of over 1,000 m comprise 60.5% of its territory. On its rather small area of 13 812 km², there are 620 145 inhabitants, according to the 2003 Census. In Podgorica, the capital city of Montenegro, live about one third of total population. In the present demographic structure younger age groups up to 29 years dominate. Situated on the boundary of eastern and western civilisations and three great religions - Orthodox, Catholic and Islamic - it represents a good example of co-existence and multi-ethnicity.

Montenegro though a small country, has an immensely complex history. The national day of 13 July marks the date in 1878 when the Congress of Berlin recognised Montenegro as the 27th independent state in the world but since it lost its statehood. It regained its statehood as one of six Republics in Tito's Yugoslavia in 1943. During the last couple of years Montenegro went through rapid social, economic, political and educational changes. Its present form of government is a Democratic Republic. In 2002 the two remaining constituents of former Yugoslavia agreed to form a new loose confederation, to be known as the Union of Serbia and Montenegro (SCG). In April 2006, Montenegro will hold a referendum on seceding from the SCG, and then eventually join the EU independently.

After more than a decade of transition, macroeconomic trends in Montenegro have started to go in a positive direction. The local currency is EURO. In 2002, the real growth rate of GDP was 1.3%, the inflation rate had decreased to 9.4%, and the unemployment rate was 23.3%. Since 1992 (when former Yugoslavia split) exports have increased by 318%, imports by 298%, while the

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foreign trade deficit has increased by 271%. The main economic goal of the Government of Montenegro is to increase employability and living standards, and to improve the general economic environment. Achieving these goals will demand a higher productivity in the economy that will depend on a more rational use of production factors. Particularly important is a highly competent workforce. This directly affects the vocational education sector that needs to be demand driven and flexible with a direct linkage to the labour market.

II. CURRENT SITUATION IN VET TT

1. VET IN THE GENERAL EDUCATION SYSTEM

According to the 1991 Census, 29.5% of the citizens completed primary school, 35%, secondary education, 8.8% post-secondary and higher education.

Secondary education follows eight years of compulsory primary education. Between 95 to 98% of students enrol the secondary education. There are three main types of secondary schools. Grammar schools or gymnasiums offer four-years' general academic education, ending with a final exam. The new VET structure defines courses on three levels: 2, 3 or 4 years. Technical and art schools offer four years' specialized education as well as a general academic curriculum. Vocational schools offer four or three years' practical and general education; in addition, there are two years' lower secondary courses.

The Montenegrin VET system is organised in 37 secondary schools - 26 are strictly vocational and 11 mixed having also gymnasiums - in 20 cities. School management and the employment of teachers is the responsibility of the headmaster and the School Board. Approx. 1 950 teachers and 580 auxiliary pedagogical and managerial staff are employed in the VET school system. Around 21 000 students take part in the process of teaching and training in vocational schools (68% of students in secondary education). The average student/teacher ratio in vocational schools is 12:1.

During 2002-03, students were being taught/trained for 84 different vocations in 15 occupational clusters. In 2004/05, 15 new VET curricula were introduced and 5 in 2005/06. Teaching is being realized in two forms: in schools and as a dual system where company placements are possible. Thus, practical training can take place in school workshops, laboratories, and private companies based on contracts.

A considerable number of new labour market oriented training programmes have been developed in priority areas such as tourism, agriculture, wood processing, stock farming, and production of food. They do not at all fulfil the needs, though.

The Ministry of Education and Science (MoES) is responsible for the structure and funding of the system, the management of publicly run institutions, inspection procedures and legal matters. The costs of all public education are financed from the Budget of the Republic of Montenegro. The average costs per year per student in secondary education have been declining: in 2001 the cost was €684 and in 2003: €630.

VET policy in Montenegro is implemented through laws, ministries and the social partners. The leading institution engaged in the realisation of VET policy is the Centre for Vocational Education. Additional expertise and support is provided by the Bureau for Educational Services, the Examination Centre and the Department for Textbooks. The MoES, in cooperation with the Ministry of Finance and other institutions, takes a leading role in developing a comprehensive strategy for decentralisation of the education sector, building on best practices and experiences with decentralisation from other countries, and including extensive consultations with local stakeholders. The Act on the Vocational Certification System, which will underpin adult training, is under way to be adopted soon.

2. TEACHERS WORK

It should be born in mind that the existing VET system was created to meet the needs of the rapidly growing industries and large businesses that emerged from the planned economy. This is largely why the system still tends to be centralized and inflexible. There is little scope for schools and teachers to innovate and adapt in line with local business and regional needs. The un-reformed curricula are too congested and rely too heavily on parroting facts while largely ignoring skills and attitudes. Teaching methods applied in VET school are predominantly frontal, and teacher-centred, while other forms of active learning such as pair work, group work and project work are used less frequently.

It has not at all been easy to be a VET teacher in Montenegro over a long period. In fact, the overall context within which vocational school teachers have been working during the last 15 years have been extremely difficult. Their remuneration is low and is not linked to performance. They have been limited

in exercising successfully their duties due to the poor quality of workshops in the schools and the lack of appropriate material for the practical training. However, in recent years, with the support of the Government of Montenegro and international donors, school equipment and infrastructure have been improved, thus creating better working conditions in schools.

Moreover, the inflexible nature of the curricula has deprived teachers from being innovative and creative in their work. The adverse conditions in which teachers work has led to a considerable de-motivation. Also, the best qualified teachers have left the education system for more rewarding (both in pecuniary and psychological terms) occupations. The amount of workloads is increasing as well as the expectations to the teachers, which is not very much in harmony with their present status. The challenge for the future is to identify methods for motivating teachers to exercise successfully their duties and to recruit quality staff. The donor funded VET reform projects, however, have been an opening to enriching teachers' work. From the very beginning the teacher population has been actively consulted on reforms through panel discussions, seminars, workshops, presentations, questionnaires etc. New curricula and many important documents could not have been designed without their active participation.

Recruitment in schools is done after application to a vacant post and selection by the school principal and the local School Board. In Montenegro, there are no dedicated courses for school principals and managers; however, a new initiative will soon offer modules for competence development of school heads.

Salary scales, payments and other income of teachers are defined by the General Law on Education and the Special Collective Agreement. Salaries of teaching staff are more or less equalized. Possible differences are based on the level of qualifications, length of service, post, number of lessons, mentoring, participation in school bodies, free activities, etc. By the adoption of by-laws, the elements for a system of promotion of teachers has been established which depending on the level and scope of demonstrated performance and results of teachers can lead to higher salary possibilities. Salary scales in VET go from € 200 to €300 depending on credits for prior work experience, professional exam, etc. A slight increase in salaries is expected in 2006.

Career possibilities for teachers and professional advancement are of great importance to improve the VET system. The professional advancement

was defined by the General Law on Education and by-laws. The application of the new regulation on professional advancement is about to begin.

3. INITIAL TEACHER TRAINING

VET teachers will have university degree. But, to qualify fully, they will also have to undergo specific training courses and seminars. The Ministry of Education, although responsible for secondary education, has no say in the character of basic teacher training programs due to the autonomy of universities. Pre-school institution pedagogues, primary and secondary education teachers go through pre-service education at the Faculty of Philosophy in Niksic and other faculties of the University of Montenegro during their studies.

The pre-service education of secondary teachers teaching general subjects consists of a four-year university course. These courses concentrate on single subjects, each running in tandem with other single-subject streams. In addition, a student, who aspires to teach general subjects in secondary schools, must have a pedagogical qualification. During their studies, students occasionally come and teach at schools. There are no separate pre-service studies for secondary school teachers teaching technical/ theoretical and practical skills subjects. Teachers teaching practical technical/theoretical subjects are usually recruited from university graduates with several years of work experience. They can take an additional teacher training course (consecutive model) that finally qualifies them to teach their subjects in secondary VET schools. Practical teacher training and skills are usually acquired by graduates who have completed the appropriate junior college at least; also by those who attained technician level supplemented by at least five years' work experience.

Teachers of general and technical/theoretical subjects should have professional and pedagogical-psychological education and psychophysical abilities. This also goes for teachers of practical training. Having graduated from the faculty and completed one year of teaching work as an apprentice, the teacher is required to sit a professional examination. In this 'apprenticeship' work year, on-the-job-training is carried out according to the set program under the direct supervision of an authorised teacher (mentor) who has at least the same degree of school qualifications as the teacher-trainee has. The Principal of a school appoints the mentor at the proposal of the Professional Panel or of the Panel of Teachers of the institution. The state examination must be passed at the end of the second year of work. Contents, program, mode, place

of taking the exam, as well as the composition of the authorized commission and fees are in detail defined by the regulation of the Ministry of Education and Science.

Teacher training was very much neglected before the introduction of the VET reform. Vocational education was not adjusted to social changes, market economy, technical-technological progress and IT. The situation has now changed; great attention is being paid to professional competence development of VET teachers, especially of those involved in pilot schools with realising new curricula in VET.

Due to the lack of specialized institutions and an adequate network of TT providers, and due to the fact that the University of Montenegro has not yet offered its TT modules, teacher training and training of trainers and instructors for adult education has been carried out by the VET Centre with the support of the MoES and international institutions. TT for general subjects has been provided by the Bureau for Educational Services.

It is noteworthy that the introduction of the Bologna Declaration in the academic 2004/2005 year in all the units of the University has already made quite a positive change.

4. IN-SERVICE TEACHER TRAINING

The present quality of the VET school system requires constant improvement of knowledge, skills, and competences of teachers. While it is the teachers' responsibility to participate in professional development initiatives, the authorised institutions need to ensure that conditions for teachers' professional advancement and promotion exist.

Although the formal qualifications of teachers in secondary vocational education are high, their knowledge of how to exercise their duties today is outdated. This is to a considerable extent due to the fact that there is no systematically organised in-service training. In fact during the last 10 years, teachers in vocational schools have not received enough training in their field of expertise, or in the implementation of new didactic methods. The lack of updated and modern knowledge and expertise deprives teachers from the opportunity of becoming 'drivers' of change and being innovative in their work. Taking into account that a pre-requisite for a successful VET system is the quality of its teachers, in the future efforts have to be made so as to update the knowledge, skills and attitudes of teachers in vocational schools and to

organise an in-service teacher training system that will ensure the permanent upgrading of their expertise.

A special problem is the fact that VET teachers who come from non-teachers faculties possess only basic pedagogic knowledge obtained through passing professional exam. Unfortunately, only a small number of them seek further professional qualification, advanced pedagogical-methodical training or specialization.

The legislative basis for the professional advancement of teachers are defined by (i) the General Law on Education (Art. 112&113), (ii) the Regulation on program and organisation of professional advancement of teachers, and (iii) The Regulation on types of ranks, conditions, mode and procedure for granting ranks to teachers. The MoES prescribes the annual program for teacher training upon the proposal of the VET Centre and the Bureau for Educational Services. Montenegro has adopted the Laws and regulations - but has a lot of problems enforcing them.

Policy papers have also been made to improve teacher competences. Important among these are: *'The Book of Changes'* (2001), the *'Strategic plan of the Education Reform for the period 2002-2004'*, the *'Strategy of Introducing ICT into the Education System of Montenegro'*, and the *'Strategic Plan for the Implementation of the Education Reform 2006-2010'* (almost drafted) and the *'Strategy of professional advancement of teachers in Montenegro'*. Within these policy proposals there are ideas for setting up as next steps important for VET reform an HRD Centre reaching out nation-wide through regional centres for the training of teachers.

Continuing professional development of teachers is carried out through programs for professional advancement. There are two types of programs:

- *Ordered programs* are requested by the MoES upon proposal from the Bureau for Educational Services and the VET Centre and are prepared and executed by certain accredited higher institution or professional associations.
- *Offered programs* for advancement are 'free' ones defined by the Employment Agency or the VET Centre and are delivered after a public tender.

Training programmes for teachers and trainers are organised in accordance with the *'Regulation on program and organisation of professional advancement of teachers'*. The VET Centre has designed a national 'Catalogue' that offers TT in subject areas, VET school leadership, school-based training

and other TT modules. A Trainers Guide was designed as a key tool to foster training curricula for teachers and teacher trainers. After completion of a module of training, the teacher obtains a certificate of participation as well as credit points. In line with the 'Regulation on types of ranks, conditions, mode and procedure of granting ranks to teachers', the teacher is granted a decision on advancement and rank.

A new cadre of 18 VET Centre trainers has been operating and is now training VET teachers since mid-2004 (130 teachers implementing new VET curricula were trained in 2004). Another important initiative is the recently founded Training Centres (North, Centre and South of Montenegro), physically based in vocational schools, which will serve both training needs of young and adults.

Licensing of teachers is not included in the present legislation, but there are initiatives, mostly by social partners, for licensing practical education teachers.

III. CHALLENGES, DEVELOPMENTS AND TRENDS

The '*Book of Changes*' from 2001, which has the status of a 'green paper', is still valid. Its vision, goals, and principles for the education reform are persisting and continuously updated through new documents and by-laws. A good example is the new '*Strategic Plan for Implementation of the Reform*' aimed at cross-institutional and cross-sectoral co-operation and ways to achieve this in the next decade. The "*Book of Changes*" identifies VET as the area most resistant to reform, but also as a strategic sector which will need to be reformed. In the field of (VET) teachers/trainers, it puts forward the following proposals:

- Redefine systemic requirements which regulate teacher training and teacher promotion;
- Create systemic conditions for teacher promotion which will be reflected in salary differentials;
- Innovate curriculum at the teacher training faculties;
- Establish a Centre for continuing teacher training;
- Enhance co-operation with NGOs which support teacher training;
- Examine possibilities for a research institute in the field of education.

Additionally, it is emphasized that teachers/trainers of practical training and instructors in a dual system should be trained in pedagogy. All teachers of

practical education must be obliged to pass a specialist's examination to be allowed to teach. These proposals are quite radical. Now and for the foreseeable future, Montenegro does not have the financial resources and the methodological expertise to make these changes on its own. So the country will need more help than ever from all its donors.

Teacher training will continue with offers published in the Catalogue for VET teacher training in 2005-2006. Efforts have been made to prepare an electronic database where teachers would be provided with an electronic, coded card and could then here enter data on place, time, module and number of points gathered during training.

Further development in VET is aimed at strengthening pre- and in-service TT, development of social partnership, creating a National Qualification Framework, introducing a system of accreditation and certification, founding of centres for teacher training, assuring instruments for publishing textbooks in a small number of copies, creating centres for training of young and adults for different occupations. There is a considerable risk of *underestimation* of local financial inputs needed both in vocational and adult education for the design of occupational standards, curricula, training programs, printing new textbooks, training of trainers and teachers, evaluation etc. in the new strategic documents.

Adult education is a special challenge and answers must be found to respond to the needs for LLL and Education for All. Besides VET, a lot of importance is given to compensatory, basic education of adults, civic education and education for environment protection. The six major goals of the EFA Project are woven into all strategic documents and laws. The Council for Adult Education has adopted a framework plan of andragogic-didactic methodological training for staff working in adult education. Literacy courses are still important: the total number of illiterate people is 30.443, or 5.9% of the total population. Out of the total number of illiterate people, 25.217 - or 82.8% - are women.²

Montenegro is in great need of establishing effective institutions and mechanisms for building social partnership in VET TT. Also in the overall VET system there is a need for a higher level of correlation and coordination among educational, labour market and employment policies. Along with social partnership, establishing a dual form of education is very important. As for the teachers, there is an initiative by some unions to promote practical

² According to the 2003 Census, this number has now been reduced to 2,9%.

training through licensing teachers and through organisation of professional panels and workshops with local and foreign experts.

IV. DONOR REFORM ACTIVITIES AND OWN RESOURCES

At the moment the EC is the only substantial donor providing assistance to the VET system focussing on two key economic sectors: tourism and wood processing. The EC funding is done through the CARDS programme where two VET Reform projects have been or are being implemented. Through 2004 funds rehabilitation works and provision of equipment have been invested to ensure appropriate training facilities.

An effective 'Bridging project' in 2004 financed by European Training Foundation (ETF) has (i) developed a VET CPD (continuing professional development) concept, (ii) a methodology, (iii) a training of trainers program and (iv) monitored the implementation in schools.

Germany and Luxembourg are planning bilateral assistance mainly focused on the VET sector. The ETF is providing policy advice and is monitoring reform in vocational education and training through its National Observatory. The GTZ, Germany, has just started its activity in Montenegro.

Another donor activity is the project EKO-NET, Austria.

A major Montenegrin investment is to fully equip 35 schools with computers in line with the national ICT strategy. The funding from local resources is part of the macro-economic policy of Montenegro to increase investments in education and VET.

V. LIST OF REFERENCES

- Strategic plan of the Education Reform for the period 2002-2004 http://www.see-educoop.net/education_in/pdf/plan-reforme-obrazovanja04-yug-mon-enl-t02.pdf
- ETF Montenegro Country plan 2005, <http://www.etf.eu.int/>
- Seven Educational laws in Montenegro <http://www.vlada.cg.yu/eng/minprosv/vijesti.php?akcija=rubrika&rubrika=34>

RELEVANT ADDRESSES

- Ministry of Education and Science, Rimski trg bb, 81000 Podgorica, <http://www.mpin.vlada.cg.yu/>
- Centre for Vocational Education and Training, Rimski trg 45, 81000 Podgorica, <http://www.cso.cg.yu/>
- Chamber of Commerce, Novaka Miloševa 29/II, 81000 Podgorica, <http://www.pkcg.org/>
- Bureau for Educational Services, Marka Miljanova 17, 81000 Podgorica, <http://www.zavodzaskolstvo.org/>
- Employment Agency Bulevar revolucije 3, 81000 Podgorica, <http://www.zzzcg.org/>
- Serbia and Montenegro, TEMPUS PROGRAM, <http://www.tempusscg.net/>
- Government of Montenegro, <http://www.vlada.cg.yu/eng/>