

Modernising the Ukrainian VET System in line with the European Policy of Lifelong Learning

Interview with Prof. Dr. Valentyna Radkevych,
Director of the Institute for Vocational Education and Training in Kiev

The Ukrainian system of vocational education and training faces major challenges. As part of an EU twinning project on the modernisation of vocational education legislation and the development of standards, Germany's Federal Institute of Vocational Education and Training (BiBB) is contributing to a Danish-German consortium to advise and support the Ukrainian Education Ministry on the implementation of imminent reforms. In the interview, Prof. Dr. Valentyna Radkevych refers to key aspects of this reform process and to opportunities that may arise from the international exchange.

BWP What are the present-day prospects of VET in Ukraine?

RADKEVYCH The system of vocational education and training must be modernised with an eye to the demands of the national economy. Hence, it is necessary to update the legislation and the regulatory framework with a view to ensure continuous professional development of the individuals and to draft a new Law on Vocational Education and Training. It is essential to promote the attractiveness of VET as well as to ensure an appropriate level of VET financing and of VET infrastructure in schools. It is time to speed up the development of the National Qualifications System as a main tool for matching labour market qualification requirements with the educational system. It will be vital to develop sectoral qualifications frameworks and competence-based occupational and educational standards; at the same time, the establishment of centres for independent VET assessment and for the validation of non-formal learning will be important steps in the modernisation process.

BWP What strategies for achieving these prospects are currently being discussed?

RADKEVYCH Today's relevant strategy for the development of labour market and employment policy is described in the »Programme for Promotion of Employment and Facili-

tating the Creation of New Jobs for the Period until 2017«. In order to implement this Programme, the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine has launched an action plan. One of the important provisions in this document is the improvement of company-based occupational training, including VET for disabled people. The »National Strategy for the Development of Education until 2021« also sets out definitive principles for supplying an occupationally competent workforce for the domestic labour market by enabling the personal development of individuals according to their own capabilities and needs on the basis of lifelong learning. Alongside these policy documents, the design of a National Qualifications Framework, the extension of the list of blue-collar professions and the development of competence-based occupational and educational standards are all significant elements in the modernisation of VET in the Ukraine.

Another relevant need is the development and implementation of a National Qualifications System, as long as it will contribute to the

- transition from the »market of diplomas« to the »market of qualifications«;
- acquisition and official recognition of qualifications for VET graduates and company employees, including those who are educated in a non-formal way in the process of their work activities;
- definition of the VET system components to ensure that learners attain appropriate qualification levels.

The implementation of a NQS will take into consideration technological, economic and demographic challenges. At the same time, establishing ties with existing and future European qualification systems will enable Ukrainian citizens to improve their professional competence, competitive power and labour market mobility.

BWP What is the Institute's role in achieving the envisaged prospects?

RADKEVYCH The main role of the Institute for Vocational Education and Training in achieving those prospects lies in conducting fundamental and applicable research studies. In the period from 2008 to 2012 researchers at the

Institute created a number of concept papers important for the VET system. The most valuable among them is the Concept for Occupational Guidance of Young People towards Industrial Occupations, which was listened to and approved at the meeting of the Cabinet of Minister's Council for Occupational Guidance on 21.02.2012 and recommended for usage not only within the VET system, but in the employment service as well. Another important product was the Concept for Developing New Generation VET Standards, on the basis of which methodology recommendations for the development of competence-based standards were prepared and approved by the Ministry of Education and Science.

The practical value of the research work is demonstrated by the development and implementation of a significant number of training and methodology complexes and e-textbooks for VET schools of various profiles, as well as the modern software product PROFTECH. This informational and analytical system is used to collect, transfer, process, store, accumulate, analyse, archive and efficiently use information for the purposes of monitoring the performance of VET authorities and VET schools.

BWP What role in this process is played by international projects and cooperation? What are the most important aspects of such cooperation, in your opinion?

RADKEYVCH International projects play an important role in the development of vocational education and training in Ukraine, because they promote implementation of innovations in relation to both theory and practice of skilled workforce training. They also provide a possibility to assess the state of the art of the VET system in Ukraine and suggest ways and mechanisms for developing it further.

With regard to the strategies cited above, I see the following two main action areas:

- support in modernising the educational legislation, developing the National Qualifications System and implementing new management technologies;
- support in developing competence-based occupational and educational standards.

Information about the Ukraine Institute of VET

The Institute was founded in 2006 and reports to the National Academy of Pedagogical Sciences (NAPS). Since 2008 the Institute has been directed by PROF. DR. VALENTYNA RADKEYVCH, who is corresponding member of the NAPS at the same time.

71 members of academic staff are employed at the Institute, working in the following fields of research:

- regional and national strategies for steering the VET system,
- quality and accessibility,
- innovative methods of teaching and learning, and
- modernisation of VET in line with European approaches to the development of competence standards and national qualifications frameworks

»The main challenge is the matching of employers' needs and employees' competencies. Therefore we have to enable the personal development of an individual according to its own capabilities and needs on the basis of lifelong learning.«



PROF. DR. VALENTYNA RADKEYVCH

In international projects we can learn from experiences of vocational training in economically advanced countries and to adapt elements into the national system.

BWP From the point of view of your Institute what do you expect from international cooperation? What form should it take? What areas of cooperation do you see?

RADKEYVCH We expect creative cooperation with foreign researchers in the field of vocational education and training by means of conferences, workshops and trainings, scientific secondments, experience sharing, development of joint research topics, creation of common textbooks and manuals on vocational pedagogy issues, e.g. development of e-textbooks.

I would like to emphasise the following activities especially:

- creating and developing a common educational environment for the training of skilled workers and a distance learning platform;
- assisting in the non-formal evaluation of domestic citizens' qualifications and defining operational procedures for non-formal learning evaluation centres/bodies, as well as advising in the development of an appropriate legislative framework;
- exploring the work of employers' associations that provide training, methodology and practical support to vocational training in other countries;
- involvement of the Institute's representatives in expert activities within the framework of international projects; and last but not least
- mutual publication of research articles in collections of scientific papers. ◀

*Interview: Snizhana Leu, Dr. Christiane Eberhardt
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