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PREPARING YOUTH FOR THE POST-WAR RECONSTRUCTION OF A DEMOCRATIC SOCIETY: THE ROLE OF VOCATIONAL EDUCATION IN UKRAINE

PRZYGOTOWANIE MŁODZIEŻY DO POWOJENNEJ ODBUDOWY
DEMOKRATYCZNEGO SPOŁECZEŃSTWA: ROLA SZKOLNICTWA
ZAWODOWEGO – PRZYPADEK UKRAINY

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Abstract:

The paper is devoted to the determination of vocational and technical education (VTE) and its role in preparing Ukrainian youth for post-war reconstruction. The paper is divided into four parts: introduction, the purpose of the paper, the main text of the paper and conclusions. The purpose of the paper is a deepening the conceptual understanding of the role of VTE in preparing young people to participate in social and industrial processes in the conditions of changes and challenges, in particular in the post-war reconstruction of Ukraine. VTE is considered as a set of specific areas, various education and training programs, state and regional boards, funding, professional and student organizations, students and other stakeholders. Its particular aim in the circumstances of post-war renewing is to train individuals, mostly young, for professional activities, form an army of highly qualified workers, increase the employment level of the population and facilitate progress in democratic values evolution. Rendering a sound decision on VTE development requires taking into account the special interests of stakeholders, and factors that influenced the spread of vocational education around the world and its development. Public administration goals and objectives should be directed towards improving quality, wide access and better funding vocational education development.

Keywords:

vocational education, youth, post-war reconstruction, career and technical education, state and regional education agencies

Abstrakt:

Edukacja zawodowa rozumiana jest jako zestaw określonych dziedzin, różnych programów edukacyjnych i szkoleniowych, funduszy, organizacji zawodowych i studenckich, studentów i innych zainteresowanych stron. Ważnym zadaniem edukacji zawodowej jest przygotowanie młodych ludzi do aktywności zawodowej, przygotowanie wykwalifikowanych robotników do pracy w różnych branżach oraz zwiększenie poziomu zatrudnienia w społeczeństwie. Rozwój edukacji zawodowej wymaga uwzględnienia szczegółowych interesów młodzieży oraz czynników, które wpływają na rozpowszechnienie edukacji zawodowej na świecie i jej rozwój. W artykule przedstawiono analizę dotyczącą problematyki przygotowania młodzieży do odbudowy społeczeństwa ukraińskiego po zakończeniu wojny na Ukrainie.

Słowa kluczowe:

edukacja zawodowa, młodzież, odbudowa powojenna, kariera i wykształcenie techniczne, państwowe i regionalne agencje edukacyjne

Introduction. The system of vocational education is of great importance in the economies of all countries, regardless of their level of socio-economic development, their economical and political situations. It performs several main tasks, including training young people to develop professional skills and knowledge, forming an army of highly qualified and social-oriented workers, and increasing the employment level of the population.

Today, in the conditions of the legal regime of martial war in Ukraine, there is already an urgent need for the post-war reconstruction of the country and the determination of the role of youth in these processes. These tasks should be understood conceptually as theoretical aspects of technical education and career-building and, at the same time, the involvement of young people in democratic processes. At the state level, concrete steps should be taken regarding the development of the network of educational institutions, the establishment of criteria for the quality of student training, and the resolution of problems that inhibit the development of professional and technical education.

Methods. During the preparation of the paper, methods of analysis and synthesis, comparative analysis, and analytical methods were used.

Literature review. The problems of vocational and technical education have been widely covered in scientific literature (Dewey; Lewis, 1998; Pérez-Illbáñez, 2018; Rojewski 2002; McCaslin & Parker 2003). Dewey underlined the

role of academic and vocational education for democracies. Lewis wrote about forces shaping policy, discourse, and curriculum in vocational education. Rojewski enlightened approaches to career and technical education, emphasized job-specific skills of VTE and career building, the relationship between schooling and work. There are a lot of publications in the field connected with a large range of VTE problems. At the same time, the complexity of the issues requires the increasing involvement of scientists in the scientific discourse, and the consideration of an increasingly wide range of problems related to vocational and technical education.

The purpose of the paper is a deepening the conceptual understanding of the role of vocational and technical education in preparing young people to participate in social and industrial processes in the conditions of changes and challenges, in particular in the post-war reconstruction of Ukraine.

The main text of the paper. It is worth to be underlined, that if higher education provides a powerful basis for the formation of a democratic society with an innovative vector of development (Pérez-Illbáñez, 2018), then technical education provides an opportunity to prepare an army of highly qualified, motivated workers who form the basis of a democratic society.

There are several definitions of vocational education. The Vocational Education Act of 1963 defined VTE as activities that include any vocational training or retraining (along with incidental field

and laboratory work) which is given in schools or classes under public supervision and control, or under contract with a State board of vocational education or a local education agency, and conducted as part of a program to fit persons for gainful employment. It was underlined that the term “gainful employment” is not limited to any level in any field; it means employment as either a semiskilled or a skilled worker, or as a technician, in a recognized occupation (The Vocational Education..., 1963, s. 11).

The 1990 Perkins Act defined vocational education as an organized educational programs offering a sequence of courses directly related to the preparation of individuals in paid or unpaid employment in current or emerging occupations requiring other than a baccalaureate or academic degree. It was also added that such programs shall include competency-based applied learning which contributes to an individual’s academic knowledge, higher-order reasoning, and problem-solving skills, work attitudes, general employability skills, and the occupational-specific skills necessary for economic independence as a productive and contributing member of society. Such a term also includes applied technology education (Vocational Education...). From the position of public administration in the USA vocational education is considered a separate sector of education aimed at acquiring job-specific skills. Today, VTE is considered much more widely as a set of specific areas, principles and mechanisms of study, various education and training programs, separate state boards, funding, professional and student organizations etc.

Such an expanded interpretation of vocational education was due to a number of factors, the main one of which, in our opinion, is neo-industrialization, the course on which most of the developed countries took.

There are many perspectives and research conducted on what forces and factors have influenced VTE policy, academic discourse, and curriculum.

In particular, T. Lewis singles out as such forces, firstly, the global economy and global

competitiveness, which determined the need for the workforce to be ready for such challenges; secondly, the nature of skills, work and activities that were required in the face of changing technologies and a high level of work organization (Lewis, 1998, s. 13). The opinions expressed by the scientist back in 1990s were later transformed into a more complete conceptual system of factors and forces.

We supposed that the system of factors that influenced the spread of vocational education around the world and its development can be divided into several groups.

1. Global factors that include factors such as the increasing mobility of the labour force, increasing requirements for personal and team competitiveness on an international scale, and internationalization of education.
2. Scientific and technological factors, namely: progress in the application of high technologies, active processes of digitalization and informatization.
3. Psychological factors, in particular: individuals realize that practical skills and abilities are more needed than possession of fundamental knowledge; desire to commercialize acquired skills and knowledge.
4. Political factors, in particular, the desire to attract a conscious part of the workforce to the ruling parties; to get a competitive advantage in the global labor marketplace.
5. Public administration factors regarding the implementation of employment policy, especially for youth, compliance with the Goals of sustainable development, especially in terms of overcoming poverty (Goal 1), developing human capital, providing quality education (Goal 4), ensuring decent work and economic growth (Goal 8).

Today in Ukraine there is another group of factors appears, which we call the *factors of involvement in the country’s post-war recovery*. This group creates prospects for the residents of Ukraine, especially young people, to be involved

in the post-war reconstruction of the country on a different, innovative and security basis. Qualified workers after receiving professional and technical education will be most involved in these processes. Moreover, it is the youth who should be responsible for the process of formation and development of the democratic foundations of Ukrainian society.

In order to create conditions for the development of vocational and technical education, the efforts of many participants in the market of these specific educational services should be coordinated. On the one hand, these are the students themselves, their relatives, sponsors, etc. On the other hand, there are labour groups, business and industry, private entrepreneurs, community and non-governmental organizations. The third group is formed by institutions that provide vocational education services, namely: universities, colleges, community colleges, schools, educational advisors, individuals with proper skills and knowledge, etc. The fourth group includes state and regional education agencies, national organizations, and state teaching certification/licensing agencies.

Separately, we will mention research institutions that have devoted their activities to the study of VTE problems. In particular, we will name those, with their seats in the U.S. Among them are such institutions as the National Career and Technical Teacher Education Institute and the American Vocational Education Research Association (AVERA). As an example of research institutions activities we describe AVERA which was organized in 1966 to (a) stimulate research and development activities related to vocational education, (b) stimulate the development of training programs designed to prepare persons for vocational education research, (c) foster a cooperative effort in research and development activities with the total program of vocational education, other areas of education and other disciplines, and (d) facilitate the dissemination of research findings and diffusion of knowledge. In 2005 AVERA changed its name to the Association for Career

and Technical Education Research (ACTER), and its official publication "Journal of Vocational Education Research (JVER)" was renamed "Career and Technical Education Research (CTER)" (Journal of Vocational Education Research). To support such research, the U.S. Congress appropriates roughly \$7.4 million annually (compared to 1,2 billion USD of annual federal investment in career and technical education). Also for improving the quality and effectiveness of career and technical education programs Congress finances development and demonstration; dissemination; and evaluation and assessment activities (About National Initiatives...).

Also, it is worth mentioning such U.S. state boards as the Department of Education, Office of Vocational and Adult Education, National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, Advisory Council of leading experts etc.

Satisfying the interests of the specified groups of stakeholders, some problems must be solved such as: matching requirements in competencies (including those from state, business, communities etc); mastering teachers' quality; managing of education at working places; forming the proper institutions which must be aimed to facilitate the access towards vocational education; certification; internationalisation of education and claims to skills; developing social and psychological characteristics of trainees.

As J. Roewski underlined, prominent themes include: the integration of academic and vocational education; emphasis on developing general (transferable) work skills rather than focusing on narrow, job-specific work skills; articulation between secondary and postsecondary vocational programs; adjustments in programs to accommodate changing workforce demographics; preparation for a changing workplace that requires fairly high-level academic skills; familiarity and use of high technology; higher-order thinking skills including decision-making and problem-solving; and interpersonal skills that facilitate working in teams (Roewski, 2002, s. 7).

The role of professional and technical education in career growth should be specially noted. In fact, this form of education can only create a foundation for further advancement up the career ladder, which is primarily guaranteed by higher education. However, as the transition to vocational training is based on high technologies and “fast cultures”, the processes of career formation and management will take on a different meaning. It will consist in the acquisition of competencies for the work of the graduate in more and more prestigious organizations, moreover, on a global scale, and not only in a single country. At the same time, the “technologicalization” of skills and abilities will lead to a reduction and underestimation of the humanitarian component of education in society, which cannot but affect the general level of ideology and culture. This fact emphasizes the importance of decision-making in curriculum design focused on humanitarian aspects.

Let us say some words about the system of vocational education in Ukraine. As of September 1, 2021, there were 695 vocational education institutions under the Ministry of Education and Culture in Ukraine. About 244,000 people studied with them, of which 236,600 were graduates of general secondary education institutions; 0.6 thousand unemployed; 7.1 thousand employed. There were 31.3 thousand pedagogical staff, of which 13.7 thousand were senior masters and masters of industrial training; 11.3 thousand teachers (Про реформу професійної освіти...).

Unfortunately, these are not not a sufficient numbers to achieve ambitious goals envisaged for the post-war reconstruction. However, the reform of VTE is now in an on-going process. For instance, the Strategy for the Development of Vocational and Technical Education until 2023 was adopted. In addition to the national strategy, strategies and strategic plans for VTE development at the regional level have been developed. In 2022 the Ministry of Education and Science approved 25 standards of professional

education, in particular, the standard of a worker in complex maintenance and repair of buildings; steeplejack; engineer; installer of sanitary-technical systems and equipment; security and fire alarm electrician; rescuer-chemist; control panel operator (Затверджені стандарти професійної освіти..., 2022).

Also, a lot of projects are currently being implemented, such as “EU4Skills: the best skills for contemporary Ukraine”. It is a joint program of the European Union and its state members to meet the needs for vocational reform realization in Ukraine. It can be expected that the system of vocational education will reach the expected level in the near future.

We consider the priority steps of the Ukrainian government in the development of VTE in the post-war period as follow: increasing the number of institutions; focusing on the innovation component in programs and curricula; when training young people, emphasis must be placed on ensuring national, regional, and individual security and special tools for it; control over the quality of education and compliance with standards; strengthening the humanitarian basis of youth training to develop democratic values; approval of new training standards in the field of VTE, useful for the post-war recovery of Ukraine’s economy; stimulating a cooperation between vocational education institutions and potential employers; expansion of international programs of cooperation on the development of vocational education.

Conclusions. The system of vocational education is a complicated separate sphere of education. Its main task is to prepare the youth as a main stakeholder in the field of school-to-work transition. Rendering a sound decision on VTE development requires taking into account the special interests of a wide range of stakeholders such as students, labour groups, community and non-governmental organizations, universities, colleges, state and regional education agencies, national organizations, state teaching

certification/licensing agencies, research institutions. The central purposes and priorities of public administration in this context are to explore new relationships between the school and the world of work, detail formulation of specific goals and objectives to improve quality, wide access and funding vocational education development; to develop a strategy and tactics for involving young people in post-war reconstruction.

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