

# ANALYSIS IN THE VOCATIONAL EDUCATION SYSTEM IN ALBANIA

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## **Abstract:**

In modern societies, transformed into information and knowledge societies, education and training play a primary role in human activities and production processes. Transformations in the labor market are giving more and more importance to those individuals who are able to be adapted to innovation and the constant demand for change. Individuals own abilities define his approach to the labor market, if the individual's abilities to work are low it will be difficult for him to enter the labor market or will soon leave it. We can say that; to contribute to the fight against unemployment means to increase the skill level of an individual in order for an employer to consider it suitable to work. For these reasons in recent years is given greater importance of vocational education. One of the objectives of which is to generate capable workers to cope with the constant technological changes. Important object of this article has been the reflection on the role played by the education policies (particularly from vocational education), in the economic, social, and cultural development of Albanian society. The method used in this article has mostly been qualitative. The data has been gathered from official sources with reference to enforcement of educational policies. In consideration has been taken the Albanian legislation, the reports, studies and statistics get in the sector of vocational education and training policy, in order to match the Albanian legislation in the educational field with international standards. The interest of the author of this research relates to his belief that education plays an essential role in the political, economic, cultural and social development of a country. Vocational education represents an important factor to deal with the new global challenges. This article tries to demonstrate what Albania has achieved in this sector.

**Keywords:** *educational policy, vocational education, society in transformation, new technologies, lifelong – learning.*

## 1. The importance of vocational education

In modern societies knowledge and training play a primary role in human activities and production processes. Transformations in the labor market are giving more and more importance to those individuals who are able to adapt to innovation and continuous demand for change. The skills of individual determine his approach to the labor market; if the individual's ability to work are low he will have difficulties entering the labor market or will soon leave it. We can say that; to contribute to the fight against unemployment means to add the skill level of an individual so that an employer will consider him appropriate for work<sup>1</sup>. Even theories about “human capital<sup>2</sup>” emphasizes that an educated population favors economic growth of a country, because reasoning and computing skills are acquired during the process of education. So, education carries in itself an economic value, because it allows the individual to increase his ability to work and therefore his productivity. Considering that when a young start to work for the first time he doesn't know the process of the tasks entrusted to him, he represents for the employer more a cost than an added value. In order to increase work skills of a young it is necessary to combine the theoretical training and work, thus reducing the difference between theory and action. Also the development and diffusion of new technologies, reflects the need for technical skills and competencies in a very high level, indicating the necessity of combining theory and professional training. For these reasons in recent years is given greater importance to vocational education. One of the objectives of which is the creation of labor force capable to cope with constant technological changes. Numerous studies have shown that an effective system of vocational and training education can facilitate innovation and economic restructuring. Investments in education and training are also seen as investments in innovation because a large part of the technical changes are the result of skilled workers and engineers directly involved in the process of production. There are three main factors why vocational and training education is considered as a supporter of innovation. First, technological innovation processes can

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<sup>1</sup> Vanessa Boretti; “Aspetti teorico metodologici e applicazione al programma di interventi formativi dell'Istruzione e Formazione Tecnica Superiore (IFTS)””; pg.121, [www.indire.it/ifts/vanessa.pdf](http://www.indire.it/ifts/vanessa.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> In this context is demonstrated by many international studies that, a more year of education for the average of workers allows an increase in the production by 5%. Also, in the majority of European countries, individuals in possession of a diploma earn at least 50% more than individuals who have not received a degree. <http://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/capitaleumano>

efficiently be acquired only by those businesses which show that they are equipped with a well-prepared staff at all levels of production. Secondly, the majority of the companies are involved in a global competition where efficiency and continuous renewal are the key factor in their development. All these have implications for the organization of work in practice. Thirdly innovation is not limited only to high-tech industries; it also plays an important role even in low-tech industries, which occupy a considerable place in the economies of all countries<sup>3</sup>. In recent years, in all societies major changes are taking place which have affected the context of how education and training systems operate. First is the economic crisis that has affected developing countries and secondly are the demographic processes that have a high impact on the labor market. These countries are giving greater importance to education and vocational training, which is seen as part of the solution to the economic crisis that has affected them. That is because professional education is the closest system to the labor market compared with other systems of education and training, which facilitates the passage of young people at work<sup>4</sup>. The latest data on European level indicate that, on the average graduates from vocational education are more successful in finding a job than candidates coming from general education. Also the same data show that they are better paid<sup>5</sup>. However it should be noted that the quality and attraction of youth to professional education varies widely between countries.

## **2. The intent of vocational education policy**

Public intervention in education is explained in terms of efficiency. Must be remembered that the development of basic knowledge is a public good<sup>6</sup> that the market is unable to provide efficiently for the whole society. In recent years, the system of vocational education and training in Albania, has gone through many changes in the structure and content, with the aim of improving it and its approach with the labor market requirements. The main goal of vocational education policy is to reduce the level of unemployment, thanks to a major qualification of labor force and a fast entrance to the youth in the labor market. Interventions in vocational education are performed to finding solutions to some problematic situations as: If compared with other European countries in Albania there is a lower percentage of young population which holds a diploma issued by vocational schools. (e.g. for the statistics of 2007-2008, the percentage of students in vocational schools in Albania was 19% whereas at

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<sup>3</sup> Commission Staff Working Document, "Vocational education and training for better skills, growth and jobs", [http://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/sw375\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/sw375_en.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> Commission Staff Working Document, "Vocational education and training for better skills, growth and jobs", [http://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/sw375\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/sw375_en.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> Commission Staff Working Document, "Vocational education and training for better skills, growth and jobs", [http://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/sw375\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/sw375_en.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> "Public goods guarantee benefits which are distributed to all communities regardless of whether or not individuals decide to buy on the other side the private goods doesn't bring external benefits and advantages". P. Samuelson, "Economia", McGraw-Hill Book Italia srl, Milan, 1998, p. 306

European level was 62.7%)<sup>7</sup>. In Albania is noticed a large presence of schools that are considered too abstract (general high schools) or with low quality (vocational schools). It is sufficient to remember that for the academic year 2009-2010 graduates from vocational schools were only 4.839 students in comparison with 29.984 graduated from general high schools<sup>8</sup>. In the country prevails a very high level of unemployment, often associated with a no preparation of individuals in comparison with the needs of the local labor market<sup>9</sup>. A large disbalance in relation to unemployment and poverty between the country's north and south<sup>10</sup>. And finally, we have a total lack of connectivity between different institutions of education and the labor market. These are the references from which policymakers have started to reform the vocational education system. Changes in the system of vocational education are set to achieve certain specific objectives: To create a system that will allow young people to gain a basic profession and also to provide the possibility for further training and education. To strengthen scientific and technological training using a new teaching methodology based on analysis and the valorization of the student initiative. To establish a large and continuous contact with the world of work. To create a system that will allow the individual to gain skills that will help him to cope with the changes and demands of the labor market, etc.

### **3. Structure of vocational education in Albania:**

What are some of the key features of the new system of vocational education?

In accordance with Law No. 10434 dated. 23.06.2011, "On some amendments to Law No. 8872, dated. 29.3.2002 "On education and training in the Republic of Albania, with the system of vocational education and training (VET) we understand: "System that includes all types of institutions that support and provide all types of educational programs and training courses, according to the National Qualifications Frame for levels 2,3,4 and 5"<sup>11</sup>. Vocational and technical education are elements of VET that have practical character and give students basic professional education, knowledge and habits necessary for a qualified professional activity, in a given specialty. Vocational education, is pursued after completion of elementary education, is offered in vocational schools and lasts 2-4 years. It is divided into the following types:

Structure with three levels (2 +1 +1 years) with 16 directions of teaching that have 56 profiles (e.g. Hotel-tourism has 5 profiles as: kitchen, reception, patisserie, bar / restaurant and travel

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<sup>7</sup> The data from the "National pre University Education Strategy 2009-2013", [www.mash.gov.al](http://www.mash.gov.al)

<sup>8</sup> The data from INSTAT, <http://www.instat.gov.al/al/themes/arsimi.aspx?tab=tabs-5>

<sup>9</sup> The unemployment rate in 2012 was 13.32%. Characteristic is long-term unemployment 86.8%. Also there is a great difference in the level of unemployment for women compared to men, in 2010 were registered as unemployed 16.7% women and 11.5% men. <http://www.instat.gov.al>

<sup>10</sup> The percentage of poverty in 2008 in northern areas was 26.6% in southern areas was 13%. <http://www.instat.gov.al/al/themes/niveli-i-jetes%C3%ABs.aspx>

<sup>11</sup> Article 7/1, Law No. 10434 dated. 23.06.2011, "On some amendments to Law No. 8872, dated. 29.3.2002 "On vocational education and training in the Republic of Albania". [www.mash.gov.al](http://www.mash.gov.al)

agency). The first level 2-year-old prepares skilled workers with basic professional skills, does not end with a diploma, but allows the passing in the second and then the third level in the same specialty. Structure with two levels (2 +2 years) with 3 directions of teaching that have 12 profiles (e.g. Information and Communication Technology 3 profiles, Economist-Business 5 profiles, and Forests 4 profiles). The first level, prepares skilled workers with basic professional skills in the first 2 years and the second level prepares qualified workers with technical skills or middle managers, ends with a diploma and allows the passage at university. Four year structure with 2 directions of teaching that have two profiles (Veterinarian with one profile and Geodesy with one profile). Equips students with technical and managerial culture in a given direction or specialty, ends with the graduation and allows passage at university. Finally, vocational education after the high school (non-university), with a duration of 1-2 years, beginning after completion of vocational secondary education (4 years) or after completion of high school. After the end of second year ends with owing a professional diploma which allows the transfer of credits in the university studies.

At country level, operate 41 schools of vocational education and training and 14 of sociol-cultural and sports formation. Schools are concentrated mainly in populated urban areas as; (Tirana, Durres, Shkodra, Vlora, Elbasan, Korca, etc.). There are several regions in the country which are not very populated and the professional education isn't offered so students can follow this kind of education only in those regions that have simultaneously professional and boarding schools.

With regard to job offers by sector at national level we distinguish that: Market offer for services and trade is 26%, while vocational education offer (Hotel and Tourism, Mechanic, Lorry Services), is about 24%. Market offer of employment in a national level in construction is 13% offer of VE courses (Construction, Geodesy, Thermo-hydraulics) is about 6%. In public administration, financial services, health and social, services market offer is about 5% while vocational education offer (Economy, Business, Office Administration, Social Services and Health) is about 10%<sup>12</sup>. From the above, we can distinguish that, in some sectors in general there is a match between labor market demand and supply of vocational education, while in other sectors we distinguish high inconsistency. e.g. Although the sector of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries holds an important stake in the national economy (about 43%) and has a large number of employees (about 48%), the offer of vocational education (VE) for this sector is only 3% of the total. The offer to work in the manufacturing sector is 41% while vocational education offer (Wood Processing, Food Technology and Textile-clothing), is about 5%<sup>13</sup>.

The number of students enrolled in the public vocational-technical schools (including here sociol-cultural and sports schools), is about 20% of students attending general secondary education. This number is quite low in comparison with regional and European countries, as a result of a low reputation that vocational education has, despite the reforming efforts and the donors support.

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<sup>12</sup> Agron Pullumbi, "Study on VET supply and demand in Albania", [www.eft.europa.eu/web.nsf/pages/Albania](http://www.eft.europa.eu/web.nsf/pages/Albania)

<sup>13</sup> Agron Pullumbi, "Study on VET supply and demand in Albania", [www.eft.europa.eu/web.nsf/pages/Albania](http://www.eft.europa.eu/web.nsf/pages/Albania)

Another important process in the development of vocational education is the modernization of the curricula to approach them with the requirements of the world of work and to increase the degree of flexibility. Characteristics of vocational education teaching methods must respect certain standards set by the Ministry of Education and Science. First, VE curricula are on two levels so we have curricula developed at the central level and a school curricula based on real requirements of the labor market and the concrete possibilities of schools. Secondly we have the modularization of the VE curricula; this is to facilitate the integration of professional competence and to enable the accumulation and transfer of obtained credits. Thirdly, the VE curricula is supported by "integral texts" which are used for a long time by a large number of users not only to a professional or direction level, this reduces their production costs.<sup>14</sup>

Currently vocational education in Albania faces many difficulties which affect its quality level. The data show that there are significant differences in the level of infrastructure, facilities and teaching tools, also in the professional level of teachers and instructors of professional practice<sup>15</sup>. Although a significant part of professional specialists are supported with training in the framework of implementation of various projects, the quality of specialist teachers remains a problem for many schools. Also professional practice due to raw material shortages and deficiencies are realized with difficulties, which are not at the level of program requirements.

The majority part of VE's financing, is done by state and local government budget. Donor projects have had an important role to. On the other side, economic activities of schools and business sponsorships have not played an important role. However, compared with the real needs of the sector, vocational education funding is inadequate. This has brought significant inequality between vocational schools of the country from the financial standpoint as well as in the infrastructure.

For, non-public vocational education we can say that it occupies a relatively small part in relation to public VE. Nonpublic VE is mainly oriented towards preparing students to pursue graduate studies in the respective directions they provide. Most of the non-public offer of vocational schools is represented by "Harry Fultz", Tirana, and "Peter Mahringer" in Shkodra, they offer professional qualifications in directions Business, Electronic and Auto-mechanic, ICT, etc<sup>16</sup>. Even non-public vocational education is concentrated in urban areas.

#### **4. Conclusions**

Despite, the increasing interest on the status of education in the media, the public and the business community are not fully informed on the true status of vocational education in Albania. It should be noted that schools and vocational training centers do not offer an

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<sup>14</sup> The data from: "National pre University Education Strategy 2009-2013", [www.mash.gov.al](http://www.mash.gov.al)

<sup>15</sup> The data from: "Research on the current state of vocational education 2009", [www.mash.gov.al](http://www.mash.gov.al)

<sup>16</sup> Agron Pullumbi, "Study on VET supply and demand in Albania", [www.eft.europa.eu/web.nsf/pages/Albania](http://www.eft.europa.eu/web.nsf/pages/Albania)

attractive environment to the students because they do not possess the necessary resources both material and human. In the vocational schools are mainly enrolled students who have not been enrolled in other high schools, as a result the quality of these schools is weak. Information for vocational schools is poor; therefore there is a lot of prejudgment for this kind of education in Albanian society. The relationship between vocational schools and the business is weak. Businesses that accept students for the realization of the professional practices are extremely scarce, and so far business have not provided any assistance in technological equipment or machinery for schools<sup>17</sup>. The lack of textbooks and teaching materials for vocational subjects has negatively impacted the quality of the preparation of students. Also in the quality of public vocational education has negatively affected the lack of qualified teachers and administrators. Financial dependency, has become an obstacle for proper implementation of professional practices So we can say that in Albania vocational diplomas fail to fulfill their primary objective they mainly serve as a tool to enable students who fail to follow other studies. Researches done in the area of vocational education and training show that it needs changes in order to increase its quality. This requires close cooperation between the various levels of the education system and society. Objectives that must be met to achieve a continuous development and improvement are clear: First, we need to invest in human resources, improving vocational policies. Secondly, there should be a greater coordination between different existing formative channels, e.g. between education system, vocational training or universities. The Albanian situation must be adapted to international standards, e.g. investing in technological development, etc. Finally we need to further develop the labor market with the aim to reduce the unemployment rate. In this context the cooperation with business is an important factor for the development of rapid and sustainable VE, etc.<sup>18</sup> The realization of these objectives requires a lot of work.

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<sup>17</sup>The data from: "Research on the current state of vocational education 2009", [www.mash.gov.al](http://www.mash.gov.al)

<sup>18</sup> Based on the national strategy for education we emphasize that: "The capacity to conduct basic research, to adopt and implement technologies in economic structure and to spread them in society, in order to develop creative new products and services, using technology, are fundamental to national competitiveness. Aneks2 – “National Strategy for Science, Technology and Innovation 2009-2015”, [www.mash.gov.al](http://www.mash.gov.al)

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