

**THE VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING IN
THE REPUBLIC OF ALBANIA**

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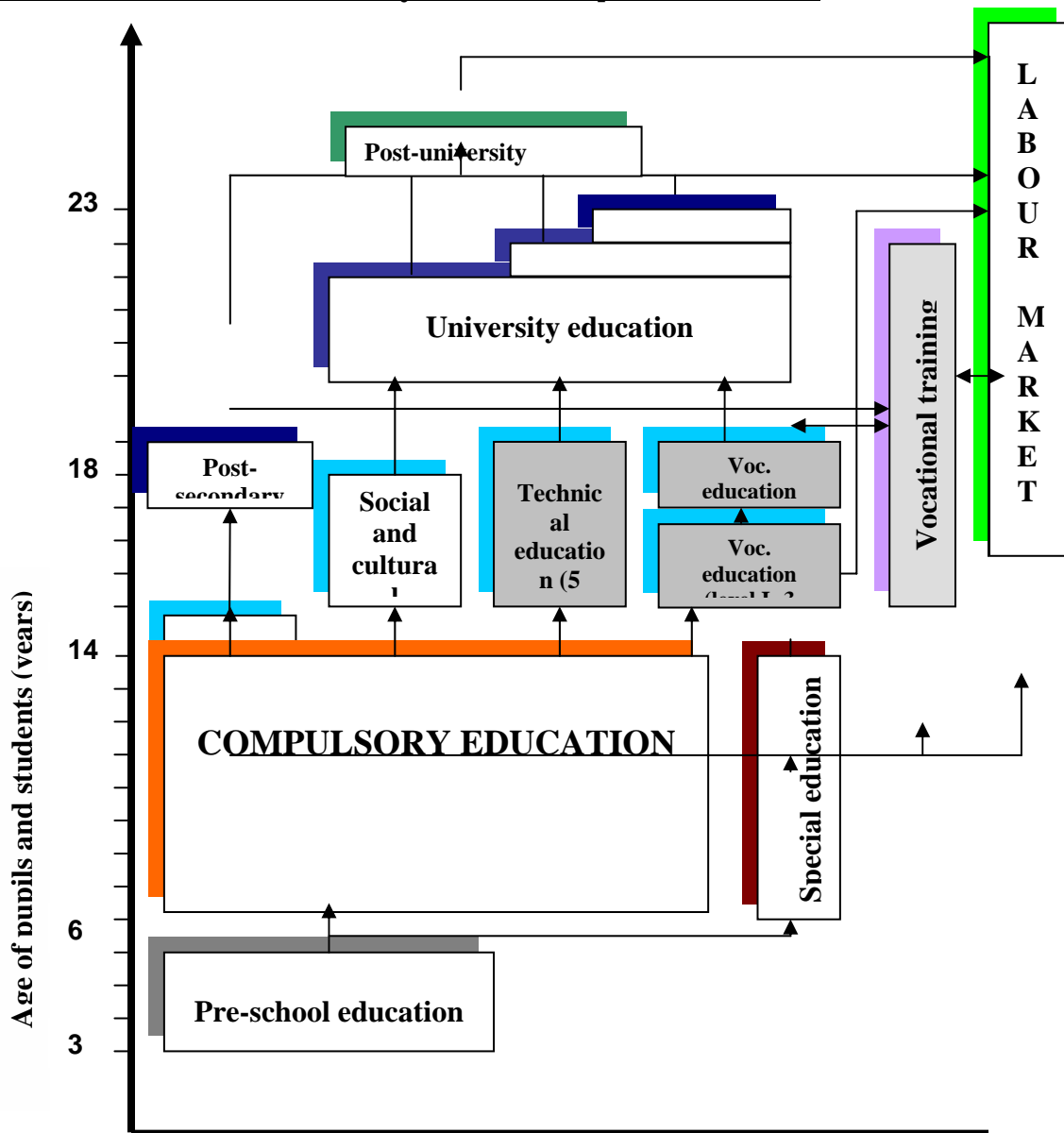
The educational system in the Republic of Albania is composed of the pre-school level (age 3-5 years), included in the basic compulsory 8 year education, divided in two cycles: the low elementary cycle (grades 1-4, age-group 6-9 years) and the higher cycle (grades 5-8, age-group 10-13 years), secondary education (grades 9-12) facultative, academic and vocational oriented, the higher non university education and the higher university and post university education.

VET – current situation

The VET system includes elementary education for the youngsters and adults, the education and formation of the employed adults as well as the re-training (re-qualification) of the unemployed. This system has to deal with preparing young people for an uncertain labour market with the provision of transferable skills and broad knowledge, which will permit their flexibility in the labour market. It must also prepare young people in dealing with uncertainty and develop entrepreneurial skills and innovative capacities.

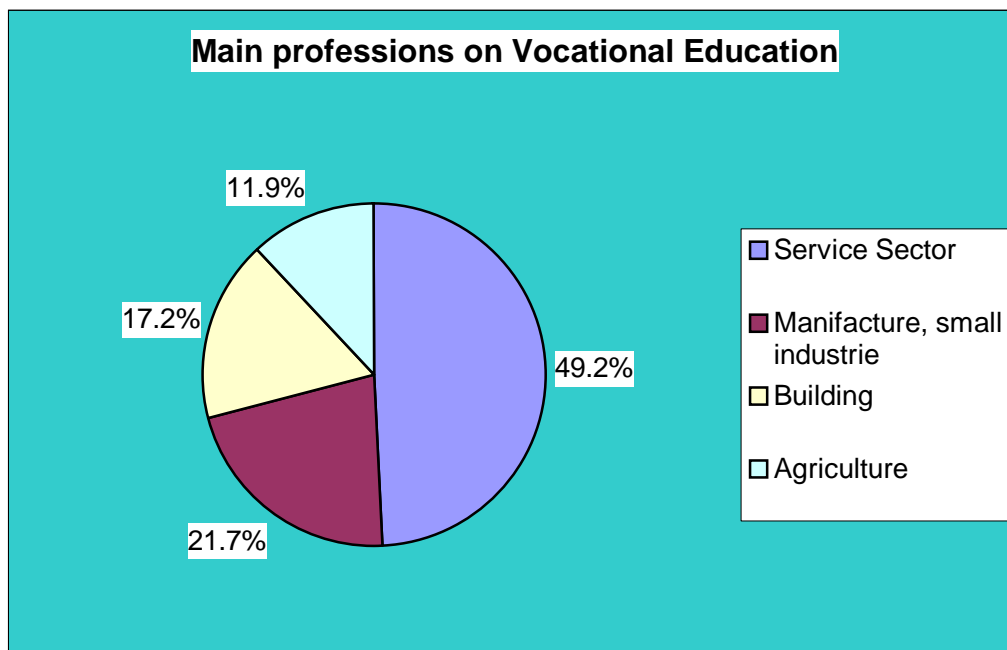
In quantitative terms, Vocational Education in Albania offers vocational qualifications in 29 professions, for different levels: 3 year vocational courses (entrance employment level), 2 year post-vocational courses (skilled worker) and 5 year courses (technical and managerial level). The public vocational schools consisted of 38 technical and vocational secondary schools in 11 prefectures of the country (out of a total of 12) prefectures of the country. Concerning the professional fields, 49,2% of the VE pupils are in the services-field; 21,7% in the manufacture and small industrie; 17,2% in construction and 11,9% in agriculture.

The scheme of the educational system in the Republic of Albania



Concerning the Public Vocational Training sector, which is under the responsibility of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, there are 9 vocational training centres, located in the main cities of the country. They offer short term courses (3-9 months) in 17 fields: computer skills, foreign languages, hairdressing, tailoring, plumbing, welding, etc. About 8,000 people have been trained in these centres in the year 2003. In addition there is an increasing offer

from NGO and other private organisations. Their offer is mainly concentrated on IT and foreign languages.



During the last 2-3 years, there are some positive evidence regarding VET development. There is a continuous increase (not yet considerable) of the students enrolling in VET, a new Law on VET is approved (March 2002) allowing the development of a number of sub-laws to institutionalise the come important interventions, and the awareness for the importance of VET is increased. The Second National Conference on VET, supported by ETF (March 2003), has given a positive impulse to such developments.

The VET Law has increased the space for interventions in the direction of increasing the synergy between VE and VT, currently operating as separate sub-systems. New sub-laws under development are trying to institutionalize this tendency for integration. A National VET Cou-ncil is established and there are proposal (CARDS program) for creation of a National VET Agency that will increase the synergy of the sectors in the central level. A lot of activities regarding teacher/instructor training, job analysis, curriculum development, meetings and conferences, publications, research and analysis in VET, are done with the common involvement of the actors from both sub-sectors. Donor support is playing an important role in this aspect.

The problems to be addressed

Recent analyses prepared by national experts for the Ministry of Education and Science and by international organisations, e.g. OECD and the ETF, demonstrate that the VET system in Albania is characterised by a number of problems at central and local level, as follows:

- The main investments have been focused mainly on schools and the changes in the system have been inconsiderable.
- There is great disproportion among vocational schools regarding the human, financial resources and infrastructure. In general the material infrastructure of vocational schools is very poor.
- The relations of the vocational schools with the labour market continue to be very weak and vocational school graduates often do not stand good chances on the labour market. The vocational education in Albania is considered as a “school based system”, where the pupils’ theoretical preparation (both general and professional) and practical preparation are achieved mainly in the vocational school environment (classroom, laboratories, workshops). In many cases, in compliance with the agreements of the school with the local business, the pupils conduct a part of their professional practice in the relevant enterprises.
- Despite the initiative to develop modules and decentralize the VET curricula, in general it continues to be traditional and not connected with the professional reality. In general the content of professional qualification is structured as follows: a) for the three year level: 34% general culture, 33% professional theory and 33% professional practice; b) for the five year level: 40% general culture, 35% professional theory and 25% professional practice.
- The level of pupils entering VE schools is much lower compared to that of pupils in the general secondary schools; this fact explains low results.
- Regarding the formal Vocational Training sector, there is not a structured system of short courses (qualifications). There is a lack of clear routes how to upgrade in a profession through qualifications.
- The initial qualification of the teachers does not exist and the continuous training is sporadically done only for the pilot schools.
- The existing normative acts limit the practical and productive activities of the professional schools. They limit as well their space for offering services for the school itself or for

others (this is linked with the self-management of the incomes profited by these activities). VE schools are able to sell services, however, because they can only retain a small percentage of this for their own discretionary use, little income is generated in this way. This brings about a very weak motivation of the teaching and managing staff of the school.

- Assessment of students is internal, the schools/training centres are responsible for assessing achievements of students, through continuous evaluation in the classrooms and workshops and the final examinations.
- There is no evidence for the involvement of social partner in the process of developing or approval of qualifications (only in the courses developed by ISDO Project - Swisscontact, there is a direct involvement of workers in “occupational analysis” process or as consultants in modular courses development). The social partners play an insensible role in drafting the policies and implementation of VET. There are sporadic cases of their involvement in the process of drafting the curricula of VE and in the final evaluation of pupils’ competences.

Financing

Education in Albania is almost totally provided and financed by the public sector. This is the case for all education levels and sectors, from pre-school education to higher education. VET institutions are also government owned and operated. MoES is the national budgetary unit for education, including vocational education, within the annual appropriations of the Ministry of Finance (MOF’s) State Budget. According to the 2002 VET Law, “public VET is supported financially by the State Budget, by the local government budget, VET national and international programs, contributions of the employers’ and employees’ associations, donors’ contribution, sponsoring and other sources allowed by law (legal sources)”.

The Law further defines that VET public institutions may perform “economic activities in fields that are related with the implementation of the teaching program, in accordance with the legal clauses”. In other words, VET public institutions are permitted by law to raise funds through entrepreneurial activity relevant to their field/s of activity and in compliance with the legal provisions. However, although the Law states that “the use of the income benefited from these activities is made in accordance with the legal clauses”, such legal clauses are not stipulated in the current Law and will need to be defined through the by-laws.

Albania's economic situation has important implications for the VET system. At present, severely constrained public finances cannot simultaneously operate the VET system and address all the urgent and widespread school rehabilitation, construction and reform needs. The current stock of skills and knowledge of the labour force still reflect Albania's economic and political past and its extreme isolation from the outside world. Aside from the emerging service sector and privatized agricultural activity, Albania's future industry and occupational profiles are generally unclear, making it difficult for the Government and individuals to make informed investment decisions about work-related education and training. In this context, Albania is working to keep intact the delivery of high-quality general education - the foundation of a well-prepared and flexible labour force - but will need to realign technical and higher education to the country's new economic environment.

One of the strategic priorities identified for the 2004-2006 *Medium-Term Expenditure Framework (MTEF)* is to increase the share of GDP allocated to spending on health and education (including VET).¹ The budget 2004 has projected that the expenditure for the education system will achieve to 3.14% of GDP² compared with 2.82% of GDP in 2003. The share of education expenditure to overall public expenditure for 2004 is projected to 10.74% compared with 9.6% of GDP in 2001.

According to the MTEF (2004-2006), the Government intends to give greater priority to the education sector in the allocation of public financing, recognizing that Albania's future economic prosperity depends on the skills of its population. It is therefore proposed that: (a) recurrent spending is to increase differently compared with other sectors; (b) wage-bill allocations increase by "high" rather of 12% annually; (c) non-wage recurrent expenditure increase by over 20% annually; and (d) priority be given to funding of secondary education.

The MOES would like to see further private sector development of: (a) technical/vocational secondary education (since although the goal of the MOES is to increase secondary VET participation from its current 17 percent participation to 30 percent, the State does not have the financial resources to do so); and (b) post-secondary technical/vocational and professional training institutions (for continuing training, specialisation and retraining). One

¹ Medium-Term Expenditure Framework 2004-2006. Ministry of Finance. Republic of Albania. June 2003.

² The estimated GDP for 2004 is 822,677 million leke.

of the most important issues is to develop an active policy stance towards private sector involvement in education and training.

However, incentives will need to be available if the private sector is to impact the VET sector more substantially than at present. All – but there are not that many - private education and training institutions in Albania are self-financing – that is, their costs are met mainly through tuition and in some cases, donations from parents, the community or Albanians living abroad.

Immediate measures could include to

- Undertake a comparative review of private sector involvement in education and training in EU member states.
- Undertake a comparative review of various funding mechanisms and financing formulas for VET applied in member states (per capita funding, vouchers, etc.).
- Undertake a comparative review of quality assurance practices in VET in EU member states.

The objectives of the strategy of the VET development

General objective

*To orient VET, in the coming decade, towards a **systemic reform**, in order to change VET into a system capable of adapting to the lack of employment stability, depending on the constantly changing labour market. This reform exceeds the merely institutional changes and requires fundamental changes regarding the vision, attitude and behaviour of all those involved.*

Specific objectives

Short term objectives (2003 – 2005)

From the *qualitative point of view*, the main index of the expected development in the first stage will be *the increase of pupil attendance in the technical and vocational education*, from 18% at present to about 30% of the general secondary education. In order to achieve this qualitative index, it is necessary to carry out the following:

- *To optimize the size of the existing vocational schools*, concentrating them in main cities (the establishment of regional or national vocational schools). This means that following the

reorganization (end of 2005), from the current vocational schools with an average of 330 pupils change into concentrated vocational schools with 700 – 1000 pupils each. Certainly this should be followed by other intervention in the school level (remodelling of buildings, the establishment of new workshops in schools and the proper equipment of the existing ones) as well as in the system level in order to increase the pupils' withdrawal in these schools and to increase the pupils' preparation level providing them with work skills (*qualitative aspect*).

- *The institutional provision of VET through:*
 - The functioning of the National VET Council to support the development of reforming policy of VET.
 - The study of the possible establishment of a National Development Agency of VET, that will support reform in VET with analyses and studies, initial and continuous training of technical teaching staff and managerial staff, the development of curricula for vocational training and to support the vocational schools with didactic means.
 - The establishment in vocational schools of partnership mechanisms (school boards) and bodies for teacher training and curriculum development at school level (departments).
- *To complete the legal framework of VET* with decisions and special regulations to implement the VET Law. Schools and training centres could be given more autonomy, in order to make them use the resources in a more flexible way, exploiting the possibilities they have at local level. The schools and the centres should become *training agencies*, able to selling a variety of services to young and adult people, as well to enterprises. The process of increased autonomy should give the schools and training centres also more flexibility in designing (parts of) the curricula, which should be adapted, inside a national frame, to the local needs. This will bring the curricula near the competences of the labour, will increase the professional competences of the teachers and in general will improve the links with the labour market.

However, as mentioned earlier, damaging commercial competition should be avoided and schools should remain aware of their principal mission, which is to provide high quality education and training.
- *To improve the curricular model for VET*, by institutionalising a *two level curriculum* (curriculum framework and school curricula), that has already been successfully piloted, as well as by gradually introducing modules in VET based on standards and bringing it

closer to the real needs of the regional labour market and concrete possibilities in schools.

- To establish a *special human resource qualification network in VET*. This network should carry out both the initial preparation of the teaching staff as well as its in-service pedagogical and professional training.
- To increase *co-operation between the VE system and the Vocational Training one (VT)*, the utilisation of human and material resources of professional schools and running short courses for adults in the occupations provided by school itself.

Mid term objectives (2006 – 2008)

- To establish a *National Professional Qualification System* (based on the national nomenclature of occupations), in order to better reflect the changes that have taken place in the employment system, the regional and European developments, pupils' demands for professional qualification and requalification, synergy with the vocational formation system and the principle of life long learning, while being at the same time an organic part of the whole education system.
- To establish institutional mechanisms and the drafting of modalities for the *accreditation* of vocational schools and training centres (public and non public) and the *licensing* of vocational qualification programs.
- To improve the *evaluation and certificate system* to meet the changes in the national professional qualification system.
- To establish a mechanism for *the vocational instruction and orientation of pupils* in order to make them aware of their choice for their schooling and future professional career.
- To strengthen the infrastructure of the VET system, by opening new schools and workshops, restructuring and equipping the existing ones through the state budget, donations and self management and utilising other financial resources.

The long term objective (2009 – 2013)

- To establish a scheme to institutionalise *the direct contribution of social partners (employer and employee)* in funding the VET and in the practical preparation of pupils in enterprises.
- To set up a *modular scheme of vocational qualification* by accumulating the credits gained in various, transparent and forms recognized in the European context.

- To establish the *external and internal verification mechanisms*, to guarantee the quality of pupil preparation in vocational schools.
- To conceptualise *a perfect model for vocational schools* with various levels and directions opened to the young people and adults as development life long learning centres for the whole community where they operate.
- To increase pupil participation in the vocational schools accounting for *40%* of the whole secondary education.

Other recommendations for increasing resources available to education and for their more efficient use, in the framework of educational reform:

One way is to increase education's share of the State Budget. The other is to explore alternative sources of revenue for VET. As to the first, MoES and MoLSA have to be able to develop their arguments and strengthen its case for a greater slice of national government revenues. As to the second, there are basically three alternative paths that can be explored.

- Identifying additional sources of public revenue, both domestic and international (greater efforts could be made to attract funds specifically for VET projects from international donors both multi-lateral and bi-lateral).
- Introducing cost recovery measures. One alternative would be where the training programs provided by the VET institutions are tailored to employer needs and paid for by the employers. Production units and the hiring out of VET facilities for community use are another one. Vocational schools could be encouraged to raise revenue by exploiting the commercial potential of their facilities and collective expertise. An ambitious program might be the establishment within schools of 'production units'. These have been adopted in a number of other countries, and particularly within their technical and vocational schools. Essentially, production units involve the development of programs using the schools facilities, staff expertise and the students themselves, in the production of goods and services for sale. Well-designed programs not only can raise considerable revenue, but also have strong pedagogical advantages, since they not only teach students useful skills, but introduce students to work practices and values that they will require in the future.
- Encouraging private financing of privately provided VET. MoES and MoLSA should develop proposals to put to the Government for the encouragement of private provision of education and training. Private initiatives in VET, of course, can be at all levels and in

all sectors of the education and training system, for example, private vocational schools and industry developed technical and vocational education and training centres. The providers could be community-based organizations, religious or other philanthropically based foundations, employer groups, other non-government organizations, international educational foundations and other education institutions.

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