Changing Occupational Status of Vet Teachers and Trainers: the Case of Lithuania

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Abstract

Nowadays changes in educational system also have reflection in vocational training system. Their roles, occupation status also was changed. Survey was conducted in Lithuanian VET schools. Research sample consisted of 324 respondents from 10 public vocational education and training centres from the different regions of Lithuania. Half of the teachers see their expression possibilities by work in the professional and personal field as quite positive; more than 90% evaluate them more positively than negatively. Small amount of respondents' state that their work very little allows or doesn't allow to express themselves. So, it means that most of VET teachers their work also see as self-expression possibility. 223 (68,8%) respondents willing to stay in the VET system. The main reasons to stay are good opportunities for learning and improvement and interesting and meaningful work. Some of teachers stress internal aspects to stay teacher in VET sector (self-expression) but much more teachers stressed external aspects such as carrier possibilities, image of VET in society. Application of professional or pedagogical development strategies is influenced by differences in VET centres, especially participation in seminars organized by suppliers / producers of materials and equipment and self-learning through the Internet, distance learning opportunities. Data collected during Erasmus+ project TEACHVET (2018-1-LT01-KA202-047053) activities.

Keywords: *Vocational training, VET teachers, VET trainers*

1. Introduction

After 1990s Lithuanian educational system experienced crucial changes. And it was several times. Vocational training system experienced changes in its structures as well as in its popularity and prestige in society.

Demographic situation in Lithuania has changed after 1990s: number of inhabitants in Lithuania decrease. Changes in society, ICT development, establishment of European Union also influence changes in education. Students are changing and new competences require from teachers in schools and universities. At the same time teachers in all levels of education need new competencies. All mention aspects determine changes in VET teachers' occupation. The aim of the study – to present changes in VET teachers' and trainers' occupation status in Lithuania.

2. Changes of VET system in Lithuania

VET system experienced changes in political, economic, evet paradigm aspects. It was a part of systematic changes in education in Lithuania. Until 1994 the employment of VET teachers was not regulated. It was required just to be good specialist in a field. As CEDEFOP states, technological changes drive the need to update VET teacher competences [3]. No special preparation for VET teachers has been in Lituania. Teachers and trainers for VET were educated as professionals with pedagogical qualification (pedagogical qualification or must have participated in a basic course on pedagogy and psychology). Concept for VET teacher education and training in Lithuania in 2001, later Law on Vocational Education and Training of the Republic of Lithuania [4] aimed to change the training system for VET teachers as regards planning, implementation and evaluation. Minister of Education and Science decree in 2005 regarding the qualification requirements for teachers in preschool, primary, general, secondary, special and vocational education programmes defines the main regulations and requirements for VET teacher education and qualification [6]. New programmes for VET teacher training in companies have been implemented in cooperation with employers since 2013; teachers can update their qualifications during traineeships in modern companies. Some special VET teacher training attraction initiatives were organized, including attracting highly-skilled and experienced employees to work as VET teachers.

Numbers of teachers and trainers in VET sector decreased in last decade. There are two types of teachers in VET institutions: general education subject teachers and vocational teachers. Vocational

teachers represent about 50-60 percent of all teaching personnel in 2019. In 2015 part of vocational teachers was about 70 percent.

Several years ago a national level project '*Development of the system for the development tof vocational and adult teachers*' qualifications' was launched. 764 vocational teachers and VET institutions' managers attended training courses on such topics as empowerment of sectoral practical training centres, evaluation of learning outcomes, VET didactics, application of research in VET practice and other topics [6]. They developed their competencies on creativity, ICT use, VET for students with special eduacional needs, teaching methodologies.

From 2002, VET curricula in Lithuania have been competence-based, with clearly-defined learning outcomes [5]. Now the activities of VET teachers and trainers and their competence development in Lithuania are legally regulated in a centralised way with significant role played by the key national laws and legal acts and the functions of regulation in this field delegated to the Governmental institutions [7]. Next to perfect knowledge and abilities in VET specialization field, nowadays the competence profile stronger focus on the field of management and organisation of the education and training processes. Last 4 year VET system has experienced fast implementation of the modular competence-based curricula in the VET system. This also leads to a re-focusing of the functions and competences of VET teachers from the didactics of the subject-based training that prioritise provision and practical application of vocational knowledge and basic skills to the approaches of integrated training in the real work processes. This requires to pay more attention to the different organisational aspects of training and learning [7].

Complexity of VET teachers competencies and activities lead not very high presige of VET teachers in society. A good image of VET services would lead to more gifted young people choosing vocational training, such young people would graduate with better results and could be more easily employed by companies [2]. Urneziene and Tolstych [8] revealed that the initial VET providers often lack clear strategies on how to use the measures of dissemination related to public relations and management of an educational institution. It might become the reason to leave VET teachers or trainers position, not to seek career in VET sector.

3. Empirical findings on changing occupational status of VET teachers and trainers

Research sample consisted of 324 respondents from 10 public vocational education and training centres from the different regions of Lithuania representing both bigger cities (*2 VET centres*), regional centres (*2 VET centres*) and rural areas (*6 VET centres*). Different data collection methods (paper and pencil questionnaires versus online responding) probably also contributed to the variability of answers. Questionnaire consisted of 65 items including some optional open-ended questions. Most variables of the research are ordinal with four or five response categories. Nominal (mostly dichotomous) variables were also used. There are no continuous variables. Frequency tables, bar and pie charts were used for descriptive statistics. Statistical analysis was performed with IBM SPSS Statistics, version 25. Structural equation modelling was performed with Mplus program versions 8.2 and 8.3.

3.1. VET teachers' personal data

Most of respondents (73,7%) are at least 41 years old. Data demonstrates tendencies in Lithuania that most of teachers at VET sector are not young. 35,1% of teachers are older than 50 years (Fig. 1).
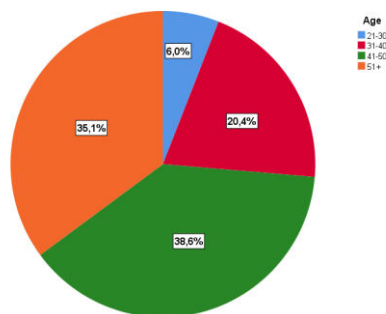

Fig.1. Distribution by respondents' age

Duration of service as a vocational training teacher or trainer is at least 11 years for most (60,5%) of the respondents (Fig. 2). Quarter of respondents have experience from 5 to 10 years.
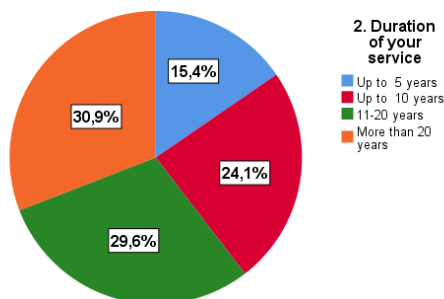
Fig 2. Distribution by respondents' duration of service as a vocational training teacher or trainer in the company

All the survey participants have professional or vocational qualification and only 5 (1,5%) have reported not to have pedagogical qualification. Professional qualifications are very different, e.g. hairdresser, manager, mechanics engineer, bookkeeper, musician, sports trainer, etc.

258 teachers (81,9%) answered that their job of a vocational training teacher is their permanent job. There are 57 (18,1%) who answered "No". 9 teachers didn't answer. For most of them job of the VET teacher (trainer) is the only job. However, quite a large proportion (38%) of teachers have other jobs, in some cases even as main jobs (Fig. 3).
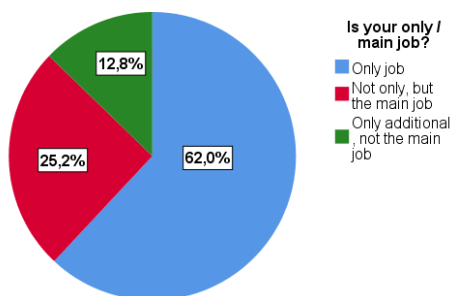

Fig 3. Distribution by respondents' job status as the only / main / only additional

3.2. Self-expression and career opportunities

Half of the teachers see their expression possibilities by work in the professional and personal field as quite positive; more than 90% evaluate them more positively than negatively. Small amount of respondents state that their work very little allows or doesn't allow to express themselves. So, it means that most of VET teachers their work also see as self-expression possibility.
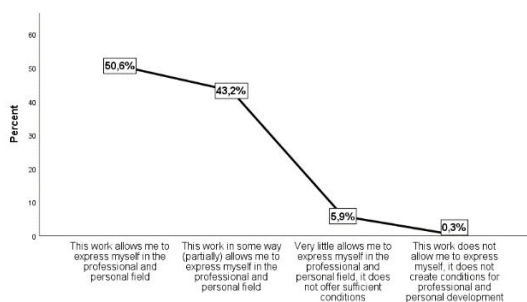

Fig 4. Expression possibilities in the professional and personal field
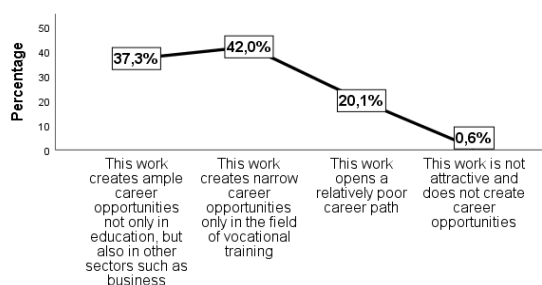

Fig 5. Career opportunities

Slightly more pessimistic are opinions of respondents about their career opportunities. 20,7% of them view these opportunities as relatively poor if not worse (Fig. 5).

Opinions of respondents about their future plans as vocational training teachers or trainers are very important: do they plan to continue working in VET or do they think to leave? Only 16 (5,0%) said that they think to give up the present career, 223 (69,0%) said "No", and 84 (26,0%) were undecided. One respondent didn't answer.

Of those 16 who think to give up, the most often mentioned reason is "unsatisfied with salary", as shown in Fig. 6. "School principals play an important role in ensuring that teachers undertake CPD: in most countries, they decide whether a teacher can or should undertake CPD" [1]. Salaries of VET teachers depend not only form principal but also from the state regulation. But they could impact teachers about their CPD and future career.
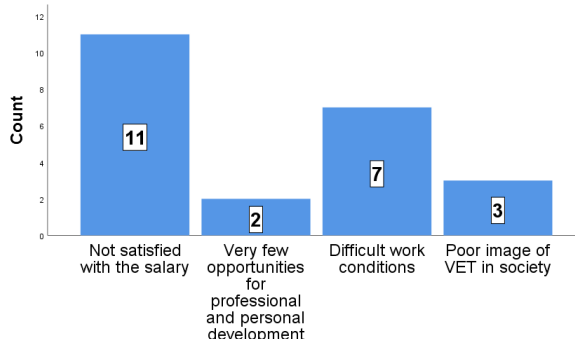

Fig 6. Reasons to give up a career as a vocational training teacher

Among those 223 who don't think to give up, the main reasons to stay are good opportunities for learning and improvement and interesting and meaningful work (Fig. 7). Image of VET in society is relatively unimportant both for those who want to quit and those who want to stay.
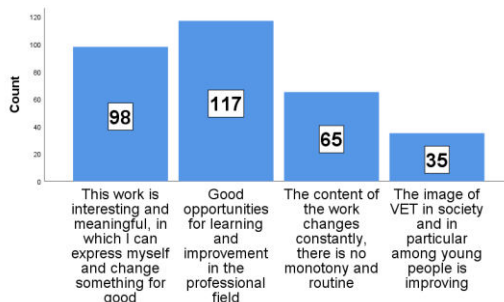

Fig 7. Reasons of not to give up a career as a vocational training teacher

Some of teachers stress internal aspects to stay teacher in VET sector (self-expression) but much more teachers stressed external aspects such as carrier possibilities, image of VET in society.

4. Conclusions

Half of the teachers see their expression possibilities by work in the professional and personal field as quite positive; more than 90% evaluate them more positively than negatively. Small amount of respondents' state that their work very little allows or doesn't allow to express themselves. So, it means that most of VET teachers their work also see as self-expression possibility. 223 (68,8%) respondents willing to stay in the VET system. The main reasons to stay are good opportunities for learning and improvement and interesting and meaningful work. Some of teachers stress internal aspects to stay teacher in VET sector (self-expression) but much more teachers stressed external aspects such as carrier possibilities, image of VET in society. Application of professional or pedagogical development strategies is influenced by differences in VET centres, especially participation in seminars organized by suppliers / producers of materials and equipment and self-learning through the Internet, distance learning opportunities.

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