

REPORT FOR DGVT ON NEW INITIATIVES IN VET (PERIOD APRIL - JUNE 2008)

Employers can influence to a greater extent instruction than before

The Minister of Education, Youth and Sports of the Czech Republic Mr. Ondrej Liska has approved further 82 framework educational programmes (FEP). These programs have been gradually developed in the National Institute of Technical and Vocational Education. About two thirds of these programmes have already been approved; the last part of these programmes will come into force within one year. Based on approved FEP, schools should prepare their own educational programmes within two years. Starting in September 2011 all secondary schools will teach according to the programmes which they will develop themselves.

Cooperation with employers from the particular region plays an important role in the development of school educational programmes. At present this cooperation is based on practical training and study visits organised for students by companies. Employers cooperate with vocational schools in organisation of final exams. The representatives of companies participate directly in these examinations. Thanks to this fact, they know what they can expect from graduates and what schools can improve. Many of them also participate in the reform of final examinations based on unified assignment for each field. This reform is being prepared now. In next few years, the number of employers which will participate in the development of school educational programmes, will increase. 30 secondary technical and vocational schools participating in the project Pilot S have already tried to develop their own school educational programmes and used them in teaching. At the beginning they analysed their hitherto work and tried to find facts about graduates' success in further study and on the labour market. In addition, they wanted to learn something about assessment of their graduates in companies and missing competences of graduates. For this purpose, it is necessary to establish close cooperation with employers from the particular region. So that a company may cooperate very well with schools, the school should appoint somebody from its staff who would regularly deal with these issues and who would perceive the advantage of this "investment in education" both for schools and companies.

Present employers require staff which is not only competent in the particular field but also have key competences, e.g. communication competences, foreign language working knowledge, problem-solving ability, ability of bearing responsibilities, willingness to learn, etc. These facts were confirmed by research which was conducted within the project VIP Kariera by the National Institute of Technical and Vocational Education. Rather surprising result is the fact that employers attach the same importance to key competences as professional ones. Small companies view them as more important than professional competences because they need the staff that is able to carry out various activities and solve problems.

In case of graduates with an apprenticeship certificate more importance is placed on reading and understanding working instructions, willingness to learn, ability to work in a team or adaptability. For the graduates with the Maturita examination it goes the same as regards reading and understanding of working instructions. Moreover, stress is also laid on willingness to learn, communication skills, ability to use ICT, problem-solving ability and knowledge of foreign languages. In the case of higher education graduates, the greatest importance is placed on problem-solving ability and last not least ability to bear responsibility, communication and decision-making skills, willingness to learn, knowledge of using information and ICT. The higher graduate education is, the higher the demands of companies are. It means that demands concern all key competences and as regards the importance of assessment there is no difference.

White Paper of Tertiary Education

In May 2008, the first version of the White Paper of Tertiary Education was submitted to public discussion. The White Paper is a conceptual strategic document that determines in which direction tertiary education in the CR should develop within following 15 - 20 years. In addition, it formulates the needs of the society and government expectation from tertiary education stakeholders (higher education facilities and tertiary professional schools).

The White Paper of Tertiary Education follows up on discussions on the general proposal for higher-education reform as well as the Tertiary Education Review drafted by OECD experts in 2006. The present version, that is being submitted now, proposes the following strategic trends of further development:

- innovation of tertiary education structure focused on a higher differentiation according to educational aims; besides predominantly professional oriented schools with bachelor's degree programmes (that enable the system to open without the risk of quality decrease) typical research faculties or institutes, if need be universities should be gradually established - they will focus on high-quality research and doctor's degree study programmes;
- the reform of funding system aimed at arising schools' interest in high quality teaching, meeting employers' expectation and gaining good results in research and development;
- the change in provision of financial support to students, based especially on low-interest guaranteed state loans and grants, saving for education and the effective system of social scholarships
- basic steps are also proposed in the area of linkage of higher education institutions with basic and applied research and cooperation of higher education institutions with companies and regions

After finishing and evaluating public and professional discussions, further work should result in the preparation of the new Higher Education Act