

## Assessment and Recognition of Qualifications in Vocational education and training in Lithuania

### **Time period of 1980-1990.**

In the Soviet totalitarian and centralized educational and vocational training system assessment and recognition of qualifications was not a subject for discussions, since the vocational qualifications were provided, assessed and recognized exceptionally by state institutions. The processes were managed in a centralized way. The students' and workers' possibilities to make influence on the processes were minimum therefore development of the real assessment and recognition of the qualifications, acquired in the official educational system can be discussed only starting from 1990.

**Time period of 1990-2005.** After restoration of independence, assessment and recognition of qualifications in the initial secondary vocational training, higher education and post-graduate education sub-systems became the subject of the laws and legal acts, regulating the areas. The Republic of Lithuania Law on Education states that the qualification is acquired after completion of the vocational training programme and/or passing qualification examinations. Article 32 of the Law on Vocational Education and Training states that the students, who complete their studies according to the programme of Level 1 of the basic vocational training are issued qualification certificates, and the ones who complete their studies according to programmes of levels II, III and IV are issued the qualified worker diplomas. The said article also states that "labour market vocational education is dedicated for acquiring of qualifications, recognized by the state or training of a person for performing labour or official functions". Article 39 states that upon completion of labour market vocational training programmes the qualification is recognized by the following documents: 1) the certificate, proving the person's readiness to perform the labour or take on the office, corresponding to the acquired vocational education; 2) qualification certificate. The acquired qualification is assessed by means of qualification examinations, which consist of two parts – the theoretical examination and practical examination. According to the description of the procedure of basic vocational training final qualification examinations, approved by the Minister of Science and Education of the Republic of Lithuania on 1 June 2005, the qualification examinations at vocational schools are arranged by

the Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Trade , the Agriculture Palace or other institutions, authorized by the Government of the Republic of Lithuania according to their competence. The said institutions also prepare the questions for the theoretical examination cards or tests and the tasks for assessment of practical skills. For qualification examinations an examination commission is formed at each school, consisting of at least three members, representing employers, vocational trainers and trade unions. The examinations organization procedure itself is quite complicated, since apart from the examination commission, the examinations are directly monitored and controlled by the qualification examination execution group, whose members can not be trainers of the questioned subject and the chief executor is usually the deputy director of the vocational school, responsible for training. In reality the participation of social partners – employers and representatives of trade unions in the qualification examinations is often very formal. Since preparation of tasks for a qualification examination is decentralized, the equal complexity and content of qualification examination tasks can not be ensured at all the vocational training institutions.

#### ***Assessment of the Competence and Skills of the Students within the Vocational Training System***

During the training/learning process the knowledge and skills of students are assessed by reporting upon completion of a subject. The ten points system is used for assessment. The qualification examination consists of two parts:

- *Assessment of theoretical knowledge* is performed in writing (cards and tests). The tests are prepared and approved by the Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Trade upon coordination with schools. The test card includes 5 questions, a test consists of no less than 5 vocational cycle subject topics of 10-20 questions each. The prepared tasks are inserted into envelopes, which are sealed at the Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Trade. The envelopes are presented to the school principal or his/her authorized person three days prior to the start of the examination and are stored in the safety deposit box of the school. On the day of the examination the envelopes are presented to the chairman of the examination commission.
- *Practical examination part* is related to the apprenticeship, performed by the student, since prior to the practical examination the school administration presents to the examination commission the apprenticeship daybooks. In case, due to the specificity of the practice the task can not be completed during the practical examination, the examination can be taken during the apprenticeship.

The qualification examination can be taken by all students, who complete the theoretical and practical training course and the final apprenticeship. The permission to take a qualification examination is

discussed at the teachers' council meeting and registered by the order of the school principal. The theoretical knowledge is assessed before the assessment of practical skills. Prior to the commencement of the qualification examination the scores spreadsheets, training registers, apprenticeship daybooks and characteristics are prepared.

The time and place of a qualification examination is set by the Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Trade. The examination venue is selected by the school.

The qualification examination commission is appointed and approved by the Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Trade. The commission includes one representative of the profession (he/she will be appointed the chairman of the commission), one teacher of the profession and one representative of the employer.

The profession teacher is delegated by the school principal. The school principal appoints the secretary of the qualification examination. The students' theoretical and practical knowledge and skills are evaluated by using ten points' system. The written and practical examination tasks are evaluated by each member of the qualification examination commission separately for each question and upon adding up the points for the evaluated answers the arithmetic average is drawn. The final examination evaluation score is drawn upon adding up the scores, given by all the members of the commission, the said score is entered into the examination minutes. The practical task is evaluated upon presentation of the completed work. The final practical examination score is established after the examination commission takes the joint decision on the evaluation of the practical task. In case of disagreement between the members of the commission the final decision is taken by the chairman of the examination commission.

### **Assessment and Recognition of Qualifications (Competences), Acquired by the Way of Nonformal and Informal Learning**

Assessment and recognition of qualifications (competences), acquired by the way of non-formal and self-contained learning is topical only in a free society, non-constrained goods, services and labour market, where there is a possibility to make attempts to develop individual professional career projects. In Lithuania such conditions came into existence only after 1990. In fact the development of the system and methods for recognition of non-formal and in-formal learning in Lithuania has not started yet. The system of preparation of professional and vocational educational standards is not finalized. Adults, who failed to acquire the qualification vocational education within the system, but who have a vocational competence, acquired when working or during self-contained learning can not evaluate their

competence, since their experience can not be assessed and recognized. The absence of the system for official recognition of non-formal and in-formal training lessens the prestige of such learning, makes the relations between employer and employees more difficult, reduces the competition on the labour market. The official institutional education is too closed for assessment and recognition of the unofficially acquired competences.

Legal basis for the assessment and recognition of competences, acquired by the way of nonformal and self-contained learning is quite fragmentary, it lacks organization (Laužackas, Stasiūnaitienė, Teresevičienė, 2005). The Republic of Lithuania Law on Nonformal Education of Adults (1998) foresees that the participants of nonformal education of adults can receive an assessment of the competences, acquired in the nonformal educational system and a document, proving completion of education, a degree of education, a part of a separate regulated programme or a module, recognized by the state only upon passing the examinations at an official educational, vocational training and higher education institution. According to Order No. 1353 of the Minister of Science and Education of the Republic of Lithuania of 1 October of 2001 “On the Approval of the Temporary Procedure for Assessment of the Knowledge, Acquired within the Nonformal Adults Education System or in a Self-Contained Manner and for Obtaining of Qualifications and Documents of Completion of Further Education and Vocational Education or Certain Degree of Module of Further Education or Vocational Education, Recognized by the State” and Order No. 70 of the Minister of Social Security and Labour of the Republic of Lithuania of 31 May 2002 “On the Approval of the Procedure for Selection of Labour Market Vocational Training Institutions and Enterprises for Equivalency Examinations” the competences, acquired by the way of nonformal and self-contained training are assessed only by the way of equivalency examinations, taken at the vocational training institutions (Laužackas, Stasiūnaitienė, Teresevičienė, 2005). The financing mechanism of the assessment, foreseen in the said legal acts, when the initiator of assessment – the student, employer or the state (in case of assessment of the competence of unemployed) pays for it, does not encourage the persons, receiving low income to learn and strive for assessment of their competences, it also lessens employers’ initiative to strive for assessment of competences of their employees. The legal framework, existing at present does not foresee the possibility of co-financing of assessment of competences, acquired by nonformal and self-contained ways.

The training programmes of schools and training centres for adults are not sufficiently flexible, the module training is not developed, the adults are trained according to programmes without considering their needs and experience.

Adults, who failed to acquire higher education, possibilities to participate in the continuous training or retraining studies at universities is limited. The system, which would allow transferring credits from one parallel institution to another or from a lower institutional level to a higher one in a smooth way has not been developed yet. The insufficient activity of social partners (employers, professional organizations, other non-governmental organizations) in the vocational training and continuing education processes brings the risk of unemployment and ambiguity of the quality of qualifications.

Although, according to the data of Social Studies Institute, until 2005 the demand for different vocational training for adults amounted to 100 000 persons, the existing insufficiently developed continued vocational training system is incapable to solve the problem and ensure availability and continuity of training for adults. The mismatch between the initial vocational training and qualification and qualification development needs and their satisfaction still remains unresolved and the resolution is insufficiently efficient.

During long time vocational teachers and trainers were not specially trained in Lithuania. Only after 1995 years in Vytautas Magnus university in Kaunas special study programs for vocational teachers were designed at the level of master and basic studies. These study courses foresee the development of teacher's evaluation and assessment of learning achievement skills (4 modules). Nevertheless a lot of teachers have huge practical experience in evaluation and assessment and non-formally acquired necessary skills. Participation in the creating the system of teachers evaluation skills development would be very helpful for the Lithuanian vocational teachers with regard to other undergoing reforms: Creation of National Framework of Qualifications, development of VET teacher training system, development of system of recognition of non –formally and informally acquired skills and others.