

## QUALITY MANAGEMENT OF VOCATIONAL TRAINING PROCESS PROBLEMS AND DEFINITIONS DURING THE NATIONAL EDUCATION COMMISSION

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**ABSTRACT:** *In the article, the authors present the concept of quality of vocational education and its implementation possibilities. The situation of the presented vocational training in Lithuania and discusses the results of the research. In the research, three vocational education schools were selected by random selection method from each region of Lithuania (Marijampolė and Alytus, Utena, Panevėžys, Šiauliai, Telšiai and Tauragė, Klaipėda, Kaunas, Vilnius). The mentioned above sampling method ensures that the generic set elements are selected independently from each other, they are irreplaceable. Data was collected from 24 Lithuanian vocational schools (i.e. 34% of schools were surveyed). 240 teachers, 340 students and 48 school heads were interviewed in total. Thus, the overall number of participants in the study was 628 (n = 628).*

**KEY WORDS:** *quality management, quality of training, vocational training process*

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## INTRODUCTION

Thus any organization in accordance to the opinion of quality management theorists (Martišauskienė, Trakšelys 2019), has always to be interested in consumers' needs and expectations, because in this way it wins trust and loyalty. The educational organization is described as organization of services (Stephenson, 2004), but the conception of quality of each educational institution, including the institution of pre-school education, may be different as each of them assess as the proceeding processes of education in its own way (Valiuškevičiūtė et al. 2008). In accordance to practical management view (Ališauskas, 2004), the particular content of quality is agreement. The subjects of agreement (service providers, consumers, politicians, etc.) represent different interests and their agreements concerning the service quality are also conceived differently.

Research methodology:

- The theory of management of service quality allows to substantiate the services of education as a process which was influenced by consumers' needs, expectations and possibilities of agreement between provider and consumer concerning service. On this basis, the services of education may be substantiated as help to consumer, when service provider consciously strives to transform it as a product-boon which belongs to consumer (Martišauskienė, Trakšelys, 2016).
- The theory of systems constitutes the basis for the description of modeling of service quality of education as a system. Then accessibility, confidence, convenience, perfection of service become important and significant not only in some definite situations, but also in the process of permanent development of service. This function as an integral system, where the activity of one segment affects the activity of whole system as reciprocal influence and dependence, is appropriate for this interaction.
- The theory of social constructionism allows to substantiate the management of quality of services education by means of providers' and consumers' approach to the process of knowledge which is important for them while emphasizing the previous experience and applying the knowledge to new situations. The management of quality services of education may be perceived through the stages of social learning

processes that allow to emphasize the possibilities of individual's adaptation in society, while mastering to perform some definite social roles (service providers and consumers) as well as to construct the general conception which means that only having the definite aim and regarding the situation of education and external and internal factors that determine this situation, it is possible to look for the common agreement on the modeling of quality of services education.

## **PRESENTATION OF THE SITUATION**

As mentioned in the theoretical part of the study, Lithuanian vocational education is part of a clearly structured education system, where it is relatively easy to move among different educational levels and without vocational training it also includes general (pre-school, pre-primary, primary, basic and secondary) and higher education (colleges and universities). The majority of vocational training programmes are implemented in the school system, i.e. training takes place in licensed offices<sup>1</sup>. According to the data of the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Lithuania, vocational education is initial and continuous. Initial vocational training can be only formal, but continuous – both, formal and informal. Formal vocational training programmes are carried out by 70 state and 3 non-state vocational education institutions<sup>2</sup>.

Description of the situation was based on the source<sup>3</sup> “Status Overview of Vocational Training 2017”.

- During the last five years, the number of vocational training students in initial vocational training institutions has increased, although pupils in general education schools and students at higher education institutions have been decreasing. This change was determined not by the increase in the number of students who acquired basic and secondary education in general education schools and the number of students who chose

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<sup>1</sup> Cedefop, Overview of apprenticeship implementation in Lithuania. Towards a clear apprenticeship path marking, 2016. Luxembourg: European Union Publications Office.

<sup>2</sup> Internet access: <https://www.smm.lt/web/lt/smm-svietimas/profesinis-mokymas/aprasymas> [wieved 15 March, 2018].

<sup>3</sup> Status overview of vocational training 2017. The Ministry of Education and Science: Educational Supply Center, p.15.

vocational education programmes, but the increase in the number of graduates at vocational education institutions, colleges and universities, who continue to study according to vocational training programmes.

- In Lithuania students, who desire to acquire qualification with secondary education, comprise the smallest part of students in the European Union. This indicator is considered to be one of the key factors in assessing the attractiveness of vocational education training in European countries.
- The average age of the initial vocational training programme learner is 25 years; however the average age of students of some programmes is 32-35 years. Every tenth student, who chooses the vocational training curriculum is 40 years or older.
- About 15-16 thousand of students, who acquired qualification, complete initial vocational education programmes annually; about 13,5 thousand of qualification certificates for vocational training are issued to persons, who have completed continuous vocational training. 52 percent of continuous vocational training graduates have acquired vocational training diplomas having qualifications in the field of transport services.

In the research, three vocational education schools were selected by random selection method from each region of Lithuania (Marijampolė and Alytus, Utena, Panevėžys, Šiauliai, Telšiai and Tauragė, Klaipėda, Kaunas, Vilnius). The mentioned above sampling method ensures that the generic cell elements are selected independently from each other, they are irreplaceable. Data was collected from 24 Lithuanian vocational schools (i.e., 34% of schools were surveyed). 240 teachers, 340 pupils and 48 school heads were interviewed in total. To ensure the confidentiality of the investigation and due to the subtlety of the subject of the research and ethics, the list of schools in which the survey was conducted, is not published.

## **ANALYSIS OF RESEARCH DATA**

Lithuanian vocational education is part of a clearly structured education system, where it is relatively easy to move among different educational levels and without vocational training it also includes general (pre-school, pre-primary, primary, basic and secondary) and higher education (colleges and universities).

The majority of vocational training programmes are implemented in the school system, i.e. training takes place in licensed offices. According to the data of the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Lithuania, vocational education is initial and continuous. Initial vocational training can be only formal, but continuous – both, formal and informal. Formal vocational training programmes are carried out by 70 state and 3 non-state vocational education institutions. In the research, three vocational education schools were selected by random selection method from each region of Lithuania (Marijampolė and Alytus, Utena, Panevėžys, Šiauliai, Telšiai and Tauragė, Klaipėda, Kaunas, Vilnius). The mentioned above sampling method ensures that the generic set elements are selected independently from each other, they are irreplaceable. Data was collected from 24 Lithuanian vocational schools (i.e. 34% of schools were surveyed). 240 teachers, 340 students and 48 school heads were interviewed in total. Thus, the overall number of participants in the study was 628 ( $n = 628$ ). To ensure the confidentiality of the investigation and due to the subtlety of the subject of the research and ethics, as well as at the request of schools the list of them in which the survey was conducted, is not published. In the survey questionnaire, 30 closed-type questions were presented, thus the aim was to find out the attitudes of service providers (teachers and school heads) and service users (students) to: the quality of the activities of teachers, school heads; the quality of the services provided; the quality of teaching content and process quality management; features of the quality management system; effective quality management options, etc.

The opinion of the participants of the study differs by selecting the most important features of the quality management process of the vocational training process. Teachers focus mainly on their activities, i.e. the quality and qualifications of pedagogues; work experience; students' achievements. Meanwhile students do not think that quality attributes distinguished by teachers are important, they are more oriented towards communion and integration; interactions and learning outcomes. School heads believe that the quality of the process of vocational training is most determined by these features: interpersonal interaction and professional communication; the quality of school heads activities; the organization of the teaching process and the expression of managerial functions. It is noticeable, that each type of respondent distinguishes those features of the quality management process of vocational training process that

directly relate to his/her own activities. However, it is worth pointing out that in this way, the participants of the study are not able to assess the work of each other and its significance in participating in the management of the quality of the vocational training process. It is strange, however, that the teachers do not see the influence of school heads in process quality management. On the contrary, school heads do not emphasize the work experience of the teacher and the activities and qualifications of pedagogues. A quantitative study also found that the majority (78%) of educational providers (pedagogues (n = 240), school heads (n = 48) (81% and 66% respectively) perceive quality as a continuous improvement of services. In addition, 52% teachers and school heads (62% and 48% respectively) define quality as the correspondence with the goal, i.e. how much the vocational training institution meets its goals and realizes the functions provided in legal acts. Defining the quality concept, 49% study participants (n = 628) emphasized the satisfaction of consumers' needs and 28% - the importance of missing errors. However, only a small percentage of educational service providers (n = 288) involved in the study perceive the quality as excellence and service exclusivity (21% respectively), although the same varied services are missed by both pedagogues and users of services – students. The participants of the study (n = 628) unanimously agree that the achievements of the students correspond to the goals set in the curriculum and the powers of the center learners. However, radical attitudes stand out in terms of the educational institution's effective contribution to the development of personality; teachers take into account students' personal, social and cultural experience, the context of their life and school activities when raising educational goals; lessons and classes are conducted according to a predefined and agreed schedule; educators in a timely manner notice and properly develop the abilities and talents of each student; the teacher, choosing the methods, forms, and tasks of the education, gets acquainted with the motives of students' activities and learning. This difference in attitude suggests that students do not always feel understood and appreciated and may lack knowledge of the organization of the teaching process. This is also evidenced by the fact that students do not know what kind of school support and assistance procedures are provided to students. Looking at the responses of school heads (n = 48), they would look much better compared to teachers (n = 240) and students (n = 340). Teachers' and school heads' attitudes towards quality management principles distinguishes. Pedagogues, who usually

understand their work as performing lessons, do not think that quality management principles are important for an organization and teaching process. Customer orientation is usually understood as the clarification of the customer's needs and expectations, as well as the quality of service provided. School heads (n = 48) have highlighted this feature as the most important, since many vocational training institutions work in a competitive environment, consequently each learner is important as well as meeting their needs and expectations is a necessary part of the quality management system. Principle of leadership for school heads (n = 48) is also more important than pedagogues (n = 240). Pedagogues probably believe that the school head is the only leader, although the principle of leadership in the educational process has long been implemented, which indicates that the teacher has to strive to become a leader and to show leadership in his activities. School heads highlighted the key indicators of their responsibility: the implementation of the institution's strategic plan; effective organization communication; organization image creation and improvement; management and planning of changes; the effectiveness of the quality management system; risk management; service quality. However, indicators of some respondents (n = 48) are not just their own responsibility. For example: effective organization communication or organization image creation and improvement. But traditionally, school heads take the most often mentioned indicators personally for themselves, but they cannot be effectively implemented without the educational institution community's inclusion and full participation.

The less topical responsibility areas for school heads (n = 48) are the following: motivation of employees; the creation and support of favorable microclimate; monitoring of educational process; team mobilization; monitoring of students' achievements and progress.

In the process of vocational training, the link between quality management and accessibility of education is particularly important. Inability to guarantee inclusive education, to create conditions for students from social risk families, students with special needs, social exclusion, discrimination, cultural isolation, etc., the training process will not be described as qualitative and in line with modern education requirements. Respondents highlighted the main aspects of the quality of the teaching process that ensure the accessibility of education: Availability of curriculum content; Physical accessibility of the school; High

quality educational, social services; Inclusive education; The image of a vocational school; Opportunities for choosing learning forms, etc.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

Qualitative provision of services in the vocational training organization is a mandatory imperative, since the focus is on the learner-user, so it is possible to conditionally distinguish factors that ensure quality management of the vocational training process:

- The consumers' moral factor lies in the idea that the users of educational services are worth getting the best quality of educational services. It is a moral task for education, which should not be a debate, and representatives of this field should first of all be concerned about creating the best possible training conditions.
- The factor of professionalism related to the activities of educational specialists, as professionals, correlates with the first one as it emphasizes the duty of all providers of education services to provide high-quality training.

Educational specialists must improve the quality of service and this is a huge challenge for the teaching and administrative staff.

- Competition factor as a daily educational routine is related to the achievements of competitors. The decrease in the number of children in educational institutions also reduces the number of teachers, which may lead to the liquidation of the institution. Consequently, competition in the educational market, which constantly improves and perfects the quality of services that will satisfy the needs of users of modern education services, is inevitably integrated into the education market.

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