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ARISING NEED OF CHANGES IN PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING SYSTEM IN BULGARIA

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Abstract: *This article is aimed at pointing out the significance and the place of the professional education level of economically active population in modern society. Education and qualifications today turn to become factors attracting increasingly greater attention. The status of national economy and labour market have direct relations with the levels of knowledge, skills and qualifications of economically active persons and to the changes in these. In the same time effective using and distribution of available human resources, of their knowledge and skills is needed as well as improving of the educational and professional training of the population which is a main priority in all EC documents.*

Results of the analysis and evaluation of the trends in the professional and educational structures of registered unemployed aged to 24 are considered in the article. Size and structures of students in the mainstream and professional schools as well as the reasons for children dropping out of the education system are analyzed.

Keywords: education and qualifications; professional education and training; level of professional qualifications; unemployed; vacant jobs.

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INTRODUCTION

This article analyses and assesses the dynamism in the professional and educational structure of registered unemployed young people up to 24 years of age. The number and structures of learners in comprehensive and vocational schools and the reasons for dropping out of one of them from the education system were monitored.

This article is instrumental for placing into the agenda the question of specific particularities typical of the relationship between the type of education and the professional skills acquired and the economic activity after that. Today, labour force faces some new requirements placed on education and qualifications to get “in” and “retain the position” on the labour market. At the same time, the unemployed part of the labour force with its qualifications would typically not correspond to the jobs offered.

In the conditions of a decrease in the number of the working age population, an increase in the quality of human capital¹ through various means stands out as a significant factor for the development of the workforce in the country, between which education and training have a significant role.

The quality of the workforce depends on a variety of factors, among which education and training traditionally occupy a place as means of enriching people’s knowledge and skills and their readiness for successful integration into the labour market (Atanasova 2016, 2015, 2014, 2014, 2013; Vladimirova, Atanasova 2014; EC 2015; etc.). The modern dynamics of the demographic structures in our country (decrease in the number and relative share of the population from the youth age groups and increase in the relative share of persons from the older age groups) poses a number of challenges to education and training, which would include providing conditions for increasing people’s participation in activities for the development and improvement of knowledge and skills (Atanassova 2015, 2013; MES 2015, 2014, etc.).

The main goal of this article is to find out what the trends in the change in the number and structure of schoolchildren and the vocational schools in Bulgaria for the period 2011–2017 have been in place and to reveal what has been their relationship with the jobs requested at the primary labour market.

For the purposes of the analysis made, data retrieved from NSI (National Statistical Institute) and provided by the National Employment Agency. The main acts put in place in the area of education (vocational education, in particular) by the current national legislation regulations were reviewed, namely **ORDINANCE No. 4 on the curriculum and the ORDINANCE on the inclusive education**. The purpose is, reviewing these basic documents, to outline both the positive and negative sides and to make some proposals concerning some changes that would increase the quality of vocational education.

First, the changes in the number of students in general education and vocational schools in the period 2011–2017 will be examined.

¹ Human capital here is defined as “an aggregate of human capabilities based on the usage of which a human would achieve some typical income” (Dulevski 2010: 173).

NUMBER AND STRUCTURE OF STUDENTS IN GENERAL-EDUCATION SCHOOLS AND VOCATIONAL SCHOOLS BY SEX AND GRADES OF EDUCATION OVER THE PERIOD 2011–2017

Over the school year 2011/2012, the number of schoolchildren in the general-education schools was 608805 and by the end of the period decreased by 3076

Table 1
Students by grades groups and sex in General-Education Schools
over the period 2011– 2017

Number of students	School years					
	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17
Total	608805	604773	606277	604481	602277	605729
5th–8th class	217143	217798	216572	212737	212366	213488
9th–13th class	141310	135013	132540	131451	129354	129023
Men	305208	303720	305050	304408	303521	305051
5th–8th class	113968	114518	114107	112311	112103	112563
9th–13th class	62027	59078	58224	57664	56895	56968
Women	303597	301053	301227	300073	298756	300678
5th–8th class	103175	103280	102465	100426	100263	100925
9th–13th class	79283	75935	74316	73787	72459	72055

¹ Including 8th class of language and other profiling vocational secondary schools with admittance of students after 7th class.

Source: NSI, <http://www.nsi.bg/bg/content/3440/>, downloaded on 01.06.2017.

Professional education and training over the school year 2011/2012 was provided in 22 schools of arts, 414 vocational secondary schools, 5 vocational schools and 22 sports schools (Table 2).

The overall number of students in the system of vocational education and training over this school year was 145728. There was a smooth decrease until the end of the period, and in the academic year 2016/2017, their number was already 131436 students. (Table 2).

During reference period, the number of art schools and sports schools remained the same, while the number of vocational secondary schools decreased. In the academic year 2016/2017, the number of those decreased by 41. This shows that there has been an outflow from the vocational education system.

The largest number of enrolled students in the period 2011–2017 are in the programmes for the acquisition of the 3rd degree of professional qualifications (Table 3). In these programmes, the relative share of students majoring in “Technical Sciences and Technical Professions” is the highest, followed by “Business and Administration” and “Services to the Person”.