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## STRATEGIC FOCUS ON ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN VOCATIONAL EDUCATION

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**ABSTRACT:** *The aim of vocational education is oriented toward sustainable performance that can contribute to the country development. A mission is of great importance to the organizations as well as for vocational high schools since it promotes vision, values and its goals. It communicates not only to the employees but to the stakeholders and provides the basis for the priorities, strategic plans and work tasks of the organization. The paper focuses on the mission statements of Macedonian vocational high schools posted on their web sites. By content analysis, the research has the aim to evident the presence of mission statement and its elements - words that support entrepreneurial spirit, like: entrepreneurship, innovation, creativity, self-employment. Aside from determining the focus of interest of vocational high schools and their readiness to develop entrepreneurial skills, the research results can contribute to promoting the quality of the mission statements of the vocational high schools.*

**KEYWORDS:** Strategic management, Vocational education, Entrepreneurship, Mission statements content analysis.

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## INTRODUCTION

The vocational education and training system is a very important for the economic development of the country. The basic aim is to educate well trained labour that will be productive, cohesive, motivated and capable of accommodating change and introducing new technologies. The authors agree that there is a need to establish link between vocational education and entrepreneurship (Lankard, 1992). Vocational educators have recognized that starting a business is a natural outcome of vocational skills training, and they are moving ahead to encourage the entrepreneurial spirit in all forms of young people's education (Calvin, 1990). During this period, secondary vocational education in Macedonia is undergoing changes as in terms of programs and the aspect of the intervention of the Government for compulsory secondary education. All this reflects the increasing need for continuous quality improvement of the education plans and programs. This situation requires a sophisticated set of objectives and reallocation of resources in these institutions. One of the goals is certainly to build school programs that will develop student's entrepreneurial skills. To achieve these goals vocational

schools need to master the strategic management skills. An important aspect of strategic management is creating a solid mission statement.

### **Secondary vocational education in Republic of Macedonia and entrepreneurship orientation**

Macedonian education system can be classified into two broad divisions i.e., pre-higher and higher education system. The pre-higher education at Macedonia can be further classified into primary, secondary and high education system. Secondary education in Republic of Macedonia comprises of the following: vocational education; high school education for disabled students; classical high school education; art high school education. Vocational education and training is a part of the educational system, which provides individual development of the individual before acquisition of competencies, knowledge and skills necessary for involvement in the labour market or continuation of the education (Law for vocational education and training, 2006). It enables initial acquisition of first, second or third level of vocational qualifications. The vocational education and training is delivered through teaching plans and programs for the following types of vocational education:

a) Vocational training for jobs with lower requirements which provides practical knowledge and skills for various labour areas. The vocational training programs can include students that obtained elementary education as well as those who have not obtained, but with an obligation, in parallel with the vocational training, to finish their elementary education. The vocational training, depending on the complexity of the occupation, can last up to two years. After the students have finished the vocational training, they acquire I level of vocational qualifications. The students that have graduated vocational training which lasted minimum one year, can continue their education into the second year of the appropriate vocational training for occupation. The students that have graduated in vocational training which lasted minimum one year can continue their education into the second year of the appropriate vocational training for occupation;

b) Vocational training for occupation is dedicated to meet the needs of the economy. Students that have obtained elementary education can enrol in the first year of vocational training for occupation. The vocational training for occupation lasts three years. The vocational training for occupation is delivered in a vocational education and training schools, while the practical training is delivered in the school and in the employers' premises. After the students have finished the secondary vocational training for occupation, they acquire the II level of vocational qualifications;

c) Technical education is education which mainly produces staff for employment in all fields of labour, but also for continuation of the education. Students that have finished elementary education, or have graduated in vocational training, can get enrolled in the first year of technical education. The duration of the technical education is four years. After graduating in technical education, the students acquire III level of vocational qualifications. The total number of education profiles is 42 into the frame of the 14 vocations. Students that have graduated technical education can continue their education into university institutions, if they acquire State Matura.

Secondary vocational students are the number of secondary students enrolled in technical and vocational education programs. Republic of Macedonia has 27 mixed high schools with classical high school and vocational high school education and 38 only vocational educational schools. According to this the total number of vocational high schools is 65.

So far there is little interest in the two-year vocational training for work, the first, lowest level of professional qualification. Such programs are offered only in a small number of occupations: mechanical, construction, electro-technical and others. The three year vocational education programs, which are the second level of professional qualifications, recorded 9.99% of the students, a relatively small percentage compared to 39.3% students who attend high school and 50.8% students who are enrolled in four year programs in vocational schools (State Statistical Office, 2011).

Presently, the Macedonia vocational high education system is undergoing reformation. The system is getting much simpler so that it can match itself with the educational systems of other European countries. The basic idea is to abolish occupations that are obsolete and archaic and to introduce new one that will satisfy labour market needs. The recommendations from European Commission for Enterprise and Industry is that if Europe want to make a success of the Lisbon strategy for growth and employment, needs to stimulate entrepreneurial mind-set among young people, encourage innovative business start-ups, and foster a culture that is friendlier to entrepreneurship and to the growth of small and medium-sized businesses. The important role of education is promoting more entrepreneurial attitudes and behaviours starting even at primary school level (European Commission, 2009).

Educational institutions have a responsibility to include in their curriculum techniques for helping students develop entrepreneurial skills (Chambers, 1989). In order to be successful in this reform it is necessary to develop partnership between business owners and vocational educators and to infuse entrepreneurial education in vocational education. Entrepreneurship education should not be confused with general business or economic studies, as its goal is to promote creativity, innovation and self-employment (European Commission, 2009).

### **Vocational high school and meaning of mission statement**

Mission statements are created to represent organizational values and guide the actions of the vocational schools. With increased demands for school management and academic accountability, school leaders are under pressure to ensure and maintain high levels of academic performance, and respond to the needs of the environment. According to Ireland and Hitt (1992) mission is important for all types of organizations because: effective mission defines the fundamental, unique purpose, distinguishes the organization from others that are in the same business, identify scope of business operations, in terms of products and markets. Mission statements serve to provide motivation, general direction, company image, colour, and set of attitudes that guide organizational actions. The mission gives the soul of the company and it is inspiring the actions of the members. The authors like Drucker (1974), Pearce and David (1987) agree that the need for strategic planning appears to be a foregone conclusion to the changing demands of the environment. Mission statements represent the first step of strategic management to adapt to changing conditions of their environment.

The success of any business, including secondary vocational education is perceived in the supply of products and services that are competitive worldwide, not just locally. Global markets are becoming reality. Macedonian high schools need to change the value system and organizational culture to be able to meet the new demands of their environment. That is to shape the profiles of students who will respond to market demands, but will be able to follow the innovations in terms of technology and have the leadership skills to create businesses to run.

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **Research questions**

This research is first of its kind in the country and seeks to explain:

- (1) Whether or not there is a mission and what is the focus of attention devoted to specific topics? and
- (2) Which words are contained in mission statements of vocational high schools with particular interest to: entrepreneurship, creativity, innovation, self-employment, small business?

### **Sample design**

In the sample design, the official data was used - a document issued by the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Macedonia (4.02.2011), with the current number/titles of the vocational schools in the country. According to the document, in the Republic of Macedonia officially registered are 65 public vocational schools. The private secondary schools in the country provide only gymnasium/general education (not vocational), so therefore they are not consisted in the sample.

### **Research method**

For the purpose of this paper a descriptive research method is used, while a (qualitative and quantitative) content analysis is used as a research technique mainly because this technique allows discovering and describing the focus of individual, group, institutional or social attention (Weber, 1990). It also allows inferences to be made which can then be corroborated using other methods of data collection. Content analysis is also useful for examining trends and patterns in documents.

The unit of analysis in the research was the missions content of vocational high schools announced on their web pages. In cases where the mission was not released, the contents of the parts: address of the founder, for us, objectives and history; were analysed. The components of the content research were the following words: entrepreneurship, small business, innovation, creativity, and self-employment.

### **Time framework of the research**

The survey was conducted in the period from 11th.January until 4th.February, 2011.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

The web search results suggest that only 12 from 65 schools have their mission statement published on their official web site.

Some of the schools (N=18) have their official web site, and most of them (N=30) are integrated in the portal which is established by the Bureau for education development. The access to the portal doesn't have an open character, it requires user name and password to log in, and the information is generally not updated. Only 3 schools promote e-learning. E-learning is a new tool that helps students to study 24 hours a day. This means that the teaching content is available online and provides immediate feedback to help students to learn. At the same time helps teachers to produce web-based courses.

The content analysis of the mission statements, as it was required for the purpose of the specifically defined research objectives, was focused particularly on these following components:

- (a) Entrepreneurship;
- (b) Innovation;
- (c) Creativity;
- (d) Self-employment.

Therefore, the results from this type of research bring disappointment from entrepreneurship perspective, as there is no emphasis on development of that kind of behaviour, skills and spirit in young people, because the components are not consisted in any of the mission statements, except in the mission of "Lazar Tanev" (secondary school for catering and tourism): "The school's mission is directed to training young people to be responsible in social life respecting the principles of democracy, tolerance, constructiveness, patience, mutual understanding, taking initiatives, being creative and being competent." According to analysis on the official education programs/curricula approved from the Ministry of Science of Republic of Macedonia for the secondary vocational schools, made for the purpose of this research, education for entrepreneurship can be found only in the subject named "business". This subject generally contains basic aspects of how to establish and run business. Components like creativity and innovation are missing. Students learn this subject in 3 and 4 year on secondary vocational education level. The exception is program in high school for the economy where students learn subject "business" starting first year. From the analysis the schools' attitude toward information and communication technology could be measured, as in most schools analysed web pages are have not been updated since 2007.

## IMPLICATION TO RESEARCH AND PRACTICE

The conclusion implied by the content analysis conducted of the missions is that schools are still self-orientated, because the missions highlight as most important values the implementation of educational plans and programs, while missing outward orientation or sense of fulfilment of wider social goal and development of entrepreneurship spirit, as high level priority. Although further research is needed to determine relationships between mission statements and the values which contribute to the development of entrepreneurship and students behaviour that is actually manifested in a school, some practical implications may be drawn from this study. As such, vocational school leaders should support the collaborative development of school - specific mission statement. Furthermore, vocational high school principals need to share their personal vision with their staff that articulates the type of organization they desire to achieve. Also, mission statements should be readily identified on campus websites to enhance communication with parents and the community.

We believe, however, that having a shared mission statement is a starting point to re-culture schools. As we stated in the beginning of this study, mission statement represent organizational values and provide direction for the employees and it will contribute to development of the entrepreneurship spirit. This research can be used as a basis for understanding the changing trends over time.

## CONCLUSION

The development of entrepreneurial skills among students is an important aspect of vocational high education. Agreeing with Drucker that the entrepreneur is a person that maximizes opportunities, a person with this competency is also required as an employee and as founder of a small business, or agent of social change for further development of the country. There is no doubt that vocational schools have an important role in this process and the upcoming reforms. But no reform is possible without changing the organizational culture and mind set of employees. A mission has important role because it shows at least a little, the values that institution tries to uphold, also the meaning and direction of action. From conducted mission research it is clear that the function of strategic management in many vocational schools has been neglected. Here we can share the opinion of Kreber and Mhina(2009) that mission cannot be held as sure proof that institution will meet the goals and ideals that they publicly declared to meet. Nevertheless, analysing the mission is important because the institution itself holds it important. This is way researching mission statement is a useful start to researching values that schools uphold. The current analysis showed that in vocational high schools lack awareness of building the entrepreneurial spirit. The essential elements and characteristics of entrepreneurship as innovation from which comes the power of entrepreneurship, learning to take the risk to self-employment, creativity, are rarely represented or do not exist in mission statements.

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