

# STANDARDIZATIONAL BASE, INSTITUTIONS AND PERSPECTIVES IN THE PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION IN ITC BRANCH

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*The education in Bulgaria is standardized by three acts. They have been amended and supplemented several times. Professional education and training is standardized by the Professional Education and Training Act (PETA). It is atypical for primary legislation, because besides statutes, it has statutory instruments, such as rules, regulations and orders, which form delegated legislation or codes of practice. The sequence of creating the educational requirements and the educational curricula and syllabi is delineated. The education and training in all professional schools should be in compliance with these curricula and syllabi. In fact the situation is quite different. As was stated at a forum at Sofia University, the links between business and education had been broken, the legislators had been randomly chosen, the experts to take these important decisions non-available.*

*Up to the present moment ICT education and training has been operating by its own momentum comparatively well because of the good tradition. In order to answer the incentive of the 21st century, it is necessary that ICT educators and trainers should formulate an ICT education and training concept, that legislators should draw up the education acts and statutory instruments, and that experts should manage the entire educational system and make the establishments work precisely.*

The goals of the present work are as follows:

- To analyse the professional education and training legislature.
- To analyse the work of the main professional education and training establishments
- To look in perspective at the ICT education and training in compliance with the legislation and establishments available
- To advance a proposal for solving the present problems

According to the National Professional Education and Training Agency the acts and the statutory instruments which standardize the professional education and training are as follows:

- The Professional Education and Training Act /PETA/
- The Public Education Act
- Educational Level, Educational Minimum and Syllabi Act
- Full Employment Incentive Act
- Full Employment Incentive Act Code of Practice
- The Public Education Act Code of Practice

- The Professional Education and Training Agency Code of Practice
- The Public Education System Documents Order No 4

This enumeration is not at all complete. An example will be provided: The accomplishment of the two of the professional education elements, the initial professional training at a working place and the statutory induction period, is also connected with the Labour Code and its regulations which allow employment of people under the age of 18 under contract.

The indicated acts and regulations have been amended and supplemented many times. The authors of these amendments argue that they are adopted to secure improvement of the acts. The truth is that these amendments are attempts at rectifying serious errors but the result of the amendments is the multiplication of the angle of the errors.

The Public Education Act presents the common problems of the professional education by, in practice, forwarding them to the Educational Level, Educational Minimum and Syllabus Act and the Professional Education and Training Act. In fact, professional education is entirely subordinate to the Professional Education and Training Act. This act can be characterized in the following way:

- In the hierarchy of the indicated acts it seems to be a subordinate regulation to the Public Education Act.
- It specifies the goals of the professional education, the levels of its implementation, the main establishments, their rights and obligations in this education and training, as well as procedures, even schedules for performing tasks in schools.

The last one turns the Professional Education and Training Act into something like an act, a code of practice, and orders which provide for the application of the code.

It is evident that the educators who ordered the Act wished to avoid writing a code of practice as a difficult and onerous task to be assigned to their expert teams.

According to the Professional Education and Training Act, the professional education establishments are as follows: schools, the National Professional Education and Training Agency and the Ministry of Education and Sciences.

The leading schools are the professional ones which provide professional education at the first, second, third, and in certain circumstances at the fourth qualification level, award secondary school diplomas and professional education and training certificates for all levels. In practice they are the ones that carry the heavy burden – the education and training of the students.

The National Professional Education and Training Agency /NPETA/ was established by a decree of the Council of Ministers and is subordinate to it. It incorporates the Ministry of Education and Sciences, branch ministries (the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Environment and Waters, the Ministry of Economy, the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry), trade associations (the Bulgarian Chamber of Commerce, the Commercial Enterprise

Union, *Revival* Bulgarian Union of Private Entrepreneurs) and trade union headquarters (the Bulgarian Independent Trade Union Confederation and *Support* Trade Union Confederation).

Formally, NPETA was created as an establishment which should link business and education and training, and specify the necessary marketable professional qualifications. The link between education and business is broken at system level. This conclusion was drawn by the author of the present work and unanimously accepted at *Business and Education* forum organized at Sofia University in December 2003 by *Bulgarian business leaders forum* organization.

NPETA is entitled to draw and introduce the Professions Schedule and the National Education Requirements for each regulated profession.

The Professions Schedule and the National Education Requirements for each regulated profession are drawn up and approved at several hierarchical levels: working groups, Experts' Committee; the Agency's Executive Board. The main work is done by the working groups, and they should include educators and business representatives from the relevant branch. The Agency announces a competition. For the lack of contestants, the expert from the relevant department includes people from his own circle of acquaintances. The working group usually includes not experts, but people concerned from the sphere of education (principals and teachers with reasoning typical for the previous century chosen on account of being pushy) and by 'business' representatives (people interested in the out-of-school professional education, who make money who are pushy too). The Experts' Committees and the Agency's Executive Board include only specialists in education management authorized by the Agency and its corporative members who are not specialists in the sphere of the education itself and even less in the ICT branch. The first adequately specified and regulated professional qualifications and national secondary education requirements are the result of the work of people from the team of Technology School *Electronic Systems* associated with the Technical University of Sofia and academics from the Technical University of Sofia.

The Ministry of Education and Sciences approves the Professions Schedule and the National Education Requirements, and in compliance with them it draws unified curricula and syllabi, monitors their implementation and administers National Professional Qualification Examinations

The circumstances in which the curricula and syllabi are drawn up are nearly the same as the ones under which the Professions Schedule and the National Education Requirements are designed. The expert responsible for the respective professional department organizes a so-called 'National conference' where the respective curricula and syllabi are written by principals and teachers. It goes without saying that these people are the expert's acquaintances already characterized. But for academics from Technology School *Electronic Systems* associated with the Technical University of Sofia usually no representatives of the Technical University or any other University or Higher School are present at these conferences.

Formally, everything in ICT professional education is all right – there exists the legislation; an establishment which assigns (the business and the country represented by the National Professional Education and Training Agency), a second one which implements (the school), and a third one which monitors (the Ministry of Education and Sciences)

The reality is quite the opposite: There is no national professional education and training concept; the link between business and education and training is broken at system level; the dynamics and specifics of the ICT branch, as well as of the other branches, are not taken into consideration. The people who worked on the Professions Schedule, on the National Education Requirements, and on the curricula and syllabi were randomly chosen, and the participation of Universities and the ICT companies concerned is largely symbolic.

The final result of the operations of the legislators and the establishments are as follows: the system of the professional education and training develops chaotically and is under its own momentum. The achievements in the ICT professional education come as a result of the hard and enthusiastic work of specialists from Technology School *Electronic Systems* associated with the Technical University of Sofia who, by good fortune, were included in the creating and reviewing of the National Education Requirements, curricula and syllabi.

The chaos and the inertia have one perspective – the collapse of the system.

The only way to solve the problem is as follows:

- A professional education concept should be drawn up at a national professional education forum. All the competent establishments concerned must be involved – the business, the universities, the Ministry of Education and Sciences, the branch ministries and the professional schools.
- The National legislation should be redrawn in compliance with the concept. These standards should ensure the foundation of working establishments and guarantee the optimum employment of the professional education and training personnel.
- In the ICT branch the National legislation and the establishments should allow the professional education and training a dynamic and flexible development, and answer its requirements adequately.

### References:

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