

The Contribution of Vocational Education and Training in the Preservation and Diffusion of Cultural Heritage in Greece: The Case of the Specialty “Guardian of Museums and Archaeological Sites”.

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Abstract

This paper combines the issue of cultural heritage with adult education, and more specifically, Vocational Education and Training (VET) in Greece. Each country’s cultural legacy constitutes a significant element of its national identity, so therefore it should be preserved and diffused to society. Vocational training in Greece is defined and the legislative framework of its institution, both in national as well as European levels, is outlined. By the elaboration of the Greek national policy, the clarification of the features of VET and also the clarification of the systems that provide Initial Vocational Training, the general framework of their objectives is set. The example of the specialty “Guardian of Museums and Archaeological Sites” of the Institutes of Vocational Training serves not only as concrete evidence and confirmation of the aforementioned policy, but also as a clear demonstration of how social consciousness regarding cultural heritage can be enhanced.

Keywords: cultural heritage, legacy, education, adult education, lifelong learning, vocational training, identity, preservation

Introduction

Every human being should be familiar with the cultural heritage of its place; since it is regarded that cultural heritage assists the formation of our cultural and also social identity. By becoming familiar with our cultural legacy we acquire a better sense of belonging, of being part of a broader social and cultural context. That is the reason why the preservation of artifacts and archaeological ensembles was considered crucial from the 18^h century, when the first nations were created and the need to attribute national identity to the citizens as well as construct organized societies became obvious. One can deduct, then, that the subject of cultural legacy is a matter that concerns everyone who belongs to an organized social structure. Education, including, Adult Education and Lifelong Learning, is the means through which culture and its manifestations can become accessible to people of all age groups. Consequently, courses related to cultural themes have been incorporated in the curriculum of different educational programs. It is a fact, though, that in Vocational Education and Training, which constitutes the educational region of interest in this paper, most of the specialties are of technical orientation and concern mostly professions related to manual labor. One of the scarce exceptions is the specialty “Guardian of Museums and Archaeological Sites”, which belongs to the specialties of the domain of culture, and through its examination we aim to confirm its contribution in the preservation and diffusion of cultural heritage in Greece.

Definition of the term Cultural Heritage

The cultural evolution of humankind can be defined as the cultural action (tangible and intangible artifacts, activities and customs) as well as the intellectual cultivation (values, tradition, education, aesthetics, and refined attitude), the combination of which shapes the people’s who live in a certain region way of living. A form of civilization cannot necessarily be of regional character, so, therefore, it can be geographically diffused and characterized by other social criteria like tribe, nationality, religion, language or some other factor of social cohesion. One civilization can be lost when the elements that structure its cultural identity deteriorate to a great extent. In spite of the fact that some civilizations disappear or transform into new cultural structures, in some cases artifacts remain as a universal legacy, which constitute the cultural heritage of a country or a nation.

The term cultural heritage comprises the ensemble of the collective experiences, knowledge, ideas, moral and aesthetic values that have been passed on from the previous generations and from generation to generation and that is brought forth and specified historically. The visible signs of the past are preserved in texts, historic spaces, museums or neighborhoods. Moreover, they are reflected in customs, traditional habits, fables and sounds, memoirs and chronicles, attitudes, rituals and memories on an individual or collective level. With the study of cultural heritage an interactive communicative process initializes between the people and the received stimuli, depending on their knowledge coordination, their memorization models, their abstraction capacity as well as the value systems of the society they belong to. Simultaneously, the artifacts receive another specific value according to a system of points and values that comprises meanings, names and verbal habits, which are attributed to the person itself. Consequently, the dialectic relation between the subject-person and the object-artifact is considered as a broader form of cultural communication that moulds a person's personality, helps in discovering meaning in the surrounding world, while, at the same time, exercises the judgmental ability to attribute meaning and value to the objects (Moore & Whelan, 2007).

Cultural legacy can therefore be divided into two categories: tangible and intangible. In the first category material artifacts that have been preserved through the centuries can be integrated (statues, buildings, churches, schools, museums etc.). By intangible heritage we mean the practical representations, expressions, knowledge and skills that communities or social groups identify as elements of their cultural heritage (oral traditions and expressions, language, figurative arts, rituals, practices) (Drogidis, 2007).

The definition and aims of Vocational Education and Training (VET)

The term vocational education is general and includes every form of education that aims to the acquirement of qualifications related to a certain profession, art or employment or that provides the necessary training and the appropriate skills as well as technical knowledge, so that students are able to exercise a profession, art or activity, independently of their age and their training level, even if the training program contains also elements of general education (Kotsikis, 2007).

Vocational training is generally defined as the part of vocational education that provides the specialized professional knowledge and skills, which attribute professional adequacy to the trainee and are the focus of every vocational training program. Vocational training can be seen as an activity or a set of activities designed in order to transmit theoretical knowledge and also professional skills that are required for certain types of jobs (Kotsikis, 2007). As an educational policy, it refers to the initial vocational training, whose aims are connected to the given offer and demand of specialties, as they are formed by the structural characteristics of each county's economy (Efstratoglou & Nikolopoulou, 2011). The main aims of VET are considered the following:

- To enhance the trainees who have completed the highest level of secondary education.
- To develop the professional knowledge and skills required for the practice of a profession.
- To evaluate the participants' educational level, in order for them to become competitive professionals in the future (Zarifis, 2000).
- To assist the students in their gentle adjustment to the changes in the productive procedures.
- To provide specialized training initial or continuing.
- To satisfy the continuously changing needs of the labor market.
- To cultivate the integration of the students in professional life and in community as well.
- To enforce the European, and also global, dimension of vocational training (Zarifis, 2003).
- To contribute to the acquirement of economical knowledge and skills that the organization and evolution of a profession demands.
- To assist to the acquaintance with the codes of social values, the integration of culture through professional socialization and the creation of a behavioral and social code that constitute the professional deontology.
- To prepare for the exercise of the rights as well as obligations of the citizen as a professional (security, protection, social benefits, taxes etc.) (Kotsikis, 2007).

The legislative framework for Vocational Education and Training in Europe

Vocational Education and Training has met great development as it is applied in great extend in developed, mostly industrially, countries, in order to equip their workforce with the new skills that the labor market demands. Moreover, it helps in the social assimilation of various social groups. The former notion, according to which vocational training was regarded as a conciliatory alternative solution, which appealed only to those who failed in continuing their studies from secondary education to university level (Patiniotis & Stavroulakis, 1997). In that context a common European policy is followed with the aim to create a common qualification framework in European as well as global level and which includes Vocational Education and Training, a fact that influences directly the shaping of the systems that provide it.

In December of 2004 the European Union with the Maastricht Declaration constituted the clarity and the acknowledgement of national training systems that was materialized with the creation of the European System of Credit Transfer for VET (ECVET). This was based on the Copenhagen Agreement in 2002 and the Ministers Council Declaration in Berlin in 2003 regarding university education. These agreements support the ideological context that the industrial and commercial structures in the European community are similar, as to constitute the implementation of a common educational system sustainable. According to Rule 119 of the European Committee in 2005, in that way a better organizational level is achieved, since the idea of the vocational training system and the creation of its structures constitute the center of interest from the beginning. The systems of VET that are created in that common context conform to the demand of the labor market and the national educational structures, while, at the same time, sustain their basic transnational characteristics (Blings & Spöttl, 2008).

The European interest in vocational education since 1990 is inspired by economical factors and is connected with the labor market. The quality in the implementation of the educational systems ensures each country's economical competitiveness and, consequently, vocational training is regarded as the most expensive type of education in European Union, where the notion of training has been alienated from education and is incorporated into economy (Zarifis, 2003).

The European Community in its effort to assist a successful professional career for young people and, furthermore, to guarantee capable manpower for the economy has set five targets for the development of education, which have influenced the evolution of vocational training as well and are the following:

1. Through the European dimension of education a multicultural Europe is created and multilingualism is promoted.
2. With the constitution of the European System of Credit Transfer the mobility of students is enforced.
3. Equal opportunities in training and education are offered.
4. The development of skills through basic and continuing education is highlighted.
5. The educational cooperation of developed and underdeveloped countries is promoted.

More specifically, according to the European Community, vocational training aims to broaden the horizons for a successful professional career for young people as well as to guarantee the creation of skillful workforce for the economy (Zarifis, 2000; Zarifis, 2003).

The institutional framework for Vocational Education and Training in Greece

In the past the Greek educational system regarding VET could be characterized as monolithic, as it was orientated only to offer exclusively general knowledge and no alternative solutions to the students who truly desired to follow a technical profession. The reason for that was the fact that Greece, as a country, afforded limited infrastructure for industrial development and, thus, limited demand for workers with specialized skills (Patiniotis & Stavroulakis, 1997). The frequent political changes and the economic instability of Greece have closely affected the educational system, as a whole, and also limited the interest in technical education, which was prioritized only after the county's inclusion in the European Community, so that the steps of the European countries in institutional as well as organizational level are followed (Zarifis, 2003).

Until the decade of 1950 the importance of VET was not evident in Greece. In 1977 it was legislated that technical education should be materialized after the completion of the compulsory nine-year duration education and, at the same time, technical modules should be incorporated.

From then on it became associated with Lifelong Learning. The second step constituted in 1985 the creation of Multidisciplinary High Schools. The institution in 1992 of the National System for Vocational Education and Training (N.S.V.E.T.) aimed at the reinforcement of professionalism in the context of competition for economic growth within the European labor market. With the same law the Organization of Vocational Education and Training (O.V.E.T.) was founded, with the goal to create, organize and supervise the function of the Institutes of Vocational Training, which mainly follow the trends of the industrially advanced countries. They aim to offer the opportunity to those who do not intend to pursue higher education to develop their skills, in order to become competitive for the labor market. In secondary level the Technical and Vocational Schools and The Technical and Vocational Training Schools provide VET. Technical education offer also non-institutional organizations, like the Organization Human Resources (Zarifis, 2003).

The case of vocational training in Greece is extremely complex, as the providing systems go along with the national policy, national tendencies and perceptions, but also receive exterior influences. The model of vocational training is the result of social transformation in connection to factors as the professional structures, the role of the public sector, private businesses and family attitudes and trends. It is a fact that Greek economy remains basically rural and the industrial development is minimal. The domains that attract most interest are those of commerce, tourism and of services in the public sector. The skepticism of the private sector to extend its activity, limits the employment of workforce. Emphasis is given to Higher Education, as it is thought that only it offers chances for professional evolution (a fact that has become to be strongly questioned in our days). The national market affects the creation of systems of VET and, from the other side external influences attribute to vocational education the form of a mosaic, where different cultural elements and educational goals are evident (Patiniotis & Stavroulakis, 1997).

The Greek national policy on Vocational Education and Training

In Greece the aims of the national policy for Vocational Education and Training were formulated by the need to promote national interests, in the context of the European tendency for educational convergence, a tendency that refers to political procedures for economic integration and can be summarized as follows:

- Diffusion of democratic ideals and values and of national culture in order to create responsible citizens.
- Provision of the necessary knowledge and skills for the practice of the students' professions.
- Creation of trustworthy and competitive manpower for coverage of places on businesses.
- Advancement of regional development with the creation and maintenance of schools in distant and under populated areas.
- Equal opportunities for education to all in order to diminish class differentiations.
- Superiority of public education against private.
- Creation of higher technical education that facilitates access to higher education.

The increased European interest for high quality education effects the creation of systems of technical and vocational training in Greece. Its coordination with typical education and the restructuring of educational systems constitute basic objectives, so that:

- Technical education is closely connected to Lifelong Learning and provides qualitative, interesting and contemporary education.
- Beyond technical skills creativity, synthetic abilities, problem solving skills and the development of initiative are also cultivated.
- The intervention of the private sector in education is reinforced, that attributes economical character to it.
- Students are informed for their capabilities regarding the demands of the labor market.
- Real work experiences are offered and simultaneously chances for future professional occupation are created.
- Counseling is offered to the students.
- Relations between school, work and society are delineated so that the students are helped in their professional choices.

Greece is one of the countries that have adopted a framework for Vocational Education and Training policy according to the economic demands of the European Community.

The distinctive features of Vocational Education and Training

According to Moodie (2002) the characteristics of VET can be classified into four basic categories, which derive from the definitions that have been attributed to it at times and which can be altered depending on the evolutions in each period's educational policy. More specifically, these characteristics are epistemological, teleological, hierarchical and actual, which do not fall into any of the first three categories. Subsequently, the identity of VET, based on this distinction, is formed as follows, without strict boundaries.

The term Vocational Education and Training signals from one hand the creation of a different and special way of training and from the other a whole field of learning. In general terms this type of education refers mostly to manual professions opposed to cultivation of the mind. There is a primal distinction between knowledge and action, theory and practice, as technical education seeks to supply the participants with the practical skills and the necessary craftsmanship in order to cope with the demands of specific professions.

The programs of vocational training are divided into those that are mostly theoretical and those of practical orientation. In any case, emphasis is given in the implementation of the theoretical knowledge into action and not in its acquirement. The theoretical knowledge provided, therefore, aims at the acquisition of technical skills and the ability to implement them in certain professions. For that reason the learning procedure is based on methods such as observation, imitation, self-correction, in addition to the theory provided by textbooks.

Basic aim of Vocational Education and Training constitutes the transmission of exploitable knowledge for participation in the labor market. It is connected to the specialization in a certain practical field and takes place in different levels of education. While it is a different category of education, it is conducted in secondary, post-secondary and tertiary level and it is organized by various organizations. A common feature of all levels, which offer VET, is the fact that it prepares the participants for involvement in the professional space. We should add that the qualities of VET are molded according to the social changes and also the specialties offered, aiming to the development and application of knowledge and skills for middle class professions, as stated by the current needs. Consequently, the systems that provide VET configure their characteristics depending on the features that are attributed to them. It is a fact that the educational system, as a characteristic of an organized society, constitutes an institutional social function that depicts the cultural level of a country as a whole. Therefore, those systems provide the means for the fulfillment of the educational procedure, in order to satisfy the needs of both the participants as well as the society in general. Their contribution to individual, social and national evolution is unquestionable and for that societies should invest not only in their organization but also in the constant review of their educational, professional and administrative activities (Petridou & Chatzipanagiotou, 2004).

Some general common features of those systems, that is the ensemble of the compatible operations and means, such as institutions, organizations or the procedures that connect them, that pursues a specific goal (Law 3191, 2003) is the offering of educational programs with duration briefer than those of Higher Education, with the exception of the Technological Institutions, which operate in a tertiary level, and also the practical orientation of their programs according to the professional or industrial needs of a country. The thematic fields that they cover are related mostly to technology and entrepreneurship and less to applied arts and culture (Moodie, 2002).

The systems that provide Initial Vocational Training in Greece

With the law 2009/1992 the National System of Vocational Education and Training (N.S.V.E.T.) was established, which intended to ensure flexibility in the offering of training specialties and the improvement of the quality of the provided training. It was materialized with the introduction of a nationally calculated process for the certification of vocational knowledge and skills. With the same law the Organization of Vocational Education and Training (O.V.E.T.) was also established that undertook the foundation and supervision of the Institutes of Vocational Training (Vretakou & Rouseas, 2002).

The National System of Connection of Initial Vocational Education and Training with Employment (N.S.C.I.V.E.T.E) was founded by the same law and by which the goals of the system of initial VET are reorganized and the designation of a new strategy, aiming to serve the needs of the manpower that pursues a new profession, make a new beginning in the working sector or succeed in its professional development, is attempted. So, an effort to convert initial training into means of prevention and confrontation of unemployment is endeavored by making training accessible to all, without exclusion (Efstratoglou & Nikolopoulou, 2011).

According to the Ministerial Decree 2508/B/4-11-2011 the operation of I.V.T. passed to the Foundation of Youth and Lifelong Learning that belongs to the Division of Programs' Studies and Infrastructure Works of the Ministry of Education, Lifelong Learning and Religious Affairs and is financed by the business program Education and Lifelong Learning of the Ministry (2007 – 2013) (<http://cert.gsae.edu.gr/iek/>).

The mission of the System of Initial Vocational Training is to design and implement training programs for the acquisition of basic professional knowledge and skills in specializations for absorption, rehabilitation, professional mobility and general advancement of workforce. The system's features can be described as follows:

- The planning and organization of initial vocational training of specialties that are in demand in the labor market and lead to the acquisition of qualifications relevant to the specifications of those specialties.
- The evaluation and certification of the structures' and institutions' of initial vocational training ability to correspond in an effective way to their mission's demands and to the responsibilities they assume.
- The evaluation and certification of the quality of the programs, and also their compatibility towards the specialties, for which they were designed for.
- The evaluation and certification of the trainers' training programs and trainers of initial vocational training.
- The implementation of programs of initial vocational training, on the basis of their design, organization, evaluation and certification.
- The evaluation of the effectiveness of the institutions, structures and programs of initial vocational training (Law 3191, 2003).

Application of the aims of the System of Initial Vocational Training: the example of the specialty “Guardian of Museums and Archaeological Sites” of the Institutes of Vocational Training

The Institutes of Vocational Training (I.V.T.), either public or private, materialize educational and training programs for adults, which aim to procure every kind of initial vocational training, as well as to ensure that trainees acquire the necessary skills through the provision of epistemological, technical, professional and practical knowledge and the cultivation of the appropriate skills for their gradual integration in the labor market, along with the reassurance of their adjustment in the changing needs of the productive procedure (Law 3789, 2010).

As mentioned before, in Greece VET is provided by the Institutes of Vocational Training. Therefore, their specialties' programs are based on the aforementioned goals of the Systems of Initial Vocational Training. The example that follows not only proves the immediate relation between those aims and their actual implementation, but also highlights the Institutes' contribution in the preservation and diffusion of cultural heritage in Greece. More specifically, the program “Guardian of Museums and Archaeological Sites” is included in the domain of culture and is materialized in very few I.V.Ts. of the country. It is addressed to individuals that desire to acquire knowledge and skills in order to exercise the profession of the protector of museums and archaeological sites either in the public or in the private sector. They will be eligible to work in the Hellenic Ministry of Culture (now Ministry of Education, Religious Affairs, Culture and Sports), in archaeological sites, museums, galleries, monasteries or temples. In the private sector they can be employed by private museums and galleries, organizations', banks or industries' art collections or in any other private institution (OVET, 2009).

Basic aim of the program is the safekeeping with zeal, rigor, responsibility, interest and care of the monuments and the artifacts of cultural heritage, whether they belong to the ancient, Byzantine, modern or contemporary period. According to the programs' regulation the basic professional skills of a guardian are the following:

- To identify and appreciate the art features that formed the global and, mostly, the Greek culture, along with those who molded historic knowledge and cultural consciousness.
- To be familiar with the basic principles of museological theory and practice.
- To be able to apply basic measures of prevention with the use of electronic security systems.
- To appreciate and protect the natural surroundings of the cultural sites.
- To acknowledge the basic principles of handling and transportation of works of art.
- To be in the position to handle emergencies, subjects related to the archaeological legislation and to communicate with the visitors.

- To be able to provide first aid, to follow the rules of the professional code of ethics and communications techniques.
- To speak a foreign language in a satisfactory manner (N.O.Q.A., 2010).

In order to achieve those goals, it is necessary that the trainees gain knowledge and skills through a circle of modules, which aim to render them capable to perform their tasks with successfulness and effectiveness. A series of theoretical as well as practical courses, designed specifically for the certain specialty, supports this objective.

In terms of educational goals, the profession of the guardian of museums and archaeological sites entails and requires good knowledge of the artifacts, the tangible heritage that they will be called to protect and also the total assessment of material culture. It exceeds the limits of an employee in the cultural field, as it constitutes a position of communication with the wider audience. Moreover, they are keepers with the literal meaning of the term. It seems, then, necessary that they should be taught modules, which will allow them to exercise successfully their duties. So, despite courses of general training, which are nowadays required for every profession (foreign language, computer skills) there are also courses intending to their familiarization with history, art, archaeology and protection of cultural legacy. Some other courses aim to sensitize trainees for their obligations regarding the museums and archaeological site's audience according to the needs of modern museology, the requirements of those places and the role of the guardian, as it is comprehended by contemporary society.

In the practical part of the training and according the professional specifications, the trainee should also have manual capabilities and skills (to be able to offer first aid, to respond to emergencies, to transfer artifacts with safety) as well as be constantly informed for evolutions in this field.

The specification of the educational goals of the specialty aims to reassure the trainees by comprising them in a context that provokes their active participation in the educational procedure (Courau, 1994). Trainees prefer educational programs with unambiguous and understandable targets, which offer them safety for the quality and the outcome of their training.

Conclusion

As derives from the above chapters, the systems that provide Vocational Education and Training aim to the organization, materialization and evaluation of programs closely connected to the labor market, which combine theoretical knowledge along with technical competences. One of the scarce specialties of initial vocational education and training, the guardian of museums and archaeological sites, combines theoretical issues regarding the importance of the preservation of Greek national heritage with the practical application of practices that support essentially this objective. It is, therefore, deduced that Vocational Education and Training can be used as means for transmitting and reinforcing cultural values and consequently as a stimulus for the understanding and the appreciation of cultural heritage. Moreover, it offers the necessary qualifications for the actual task of its preservation and safeguarding. The domain of culture is nevertheless poorly represented in all structures of Adult Education and because of that the significant role of the analyzed specialty should be highlighted and set as an example, as, after all, each country's cultural legacy belongs to every citizen and constitutes a characteristic part of every person's personality. Finally, sustainable cultural heritage is a contemporary issue that attracts much attention and the role of museums' guardians in that direction verifies its importance.

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