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THE ROLE OF ADULT VOCATIONAL EDUCATION IN LATVIA

The decisive factor for the country's economic development is competitive workforce resources. One of the global socio-economic problems of the 21st century in developed countries is an aging population, due to the influence of which the importance of adult vocational higher education becomes significant, as changes in the demographic structure mean that labour market needs are increasingly being met by –silver>> human resources. The authors conclude that the existing vocational education system needs to be improved, fully integrating adult education into it, which would serve as one of the basic elements of the support system for the creation of a high-quality state business environment and stimulate the achievement of the national economic goals. The aim of the article is to analyse the vocational education system and types of its acquisition in Latvia. As a result of the research, the authors have demonstrated the relevance between the implementation of vocational higher education and the quality of business environment. Recommendations for the implementation of high-quality vocational higher education are provided in order to ensure the compliance of the existing workforce with the requirements of the national. In the study well-recognized methods: document analysis, comparison, classification, and statistical analysis, will be used. The main sources of information: Central Statistical Bureau of the Republic of Latvia and Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Latvia.

Keywords: Adult vocational education; population aging; vocational higher education; workforce resources.

1. Analysis of the Vocational Education System in Latvia

Vocational education is a key tool in solving many global problems. In the authors' view, vocational education needs to adapt to labour market demand trends and provide a business environment with a qualitative and competitive workforce. Vocational secondary and higher or college education are important, as due to the decrease in the number of people and the population aging it is important not to reduce the value and competitiveness of human resources. In Figure 1, the authors have developed a scheme for the acquisition of vocational education, which shows approaches through which the adult audience can acquire education.

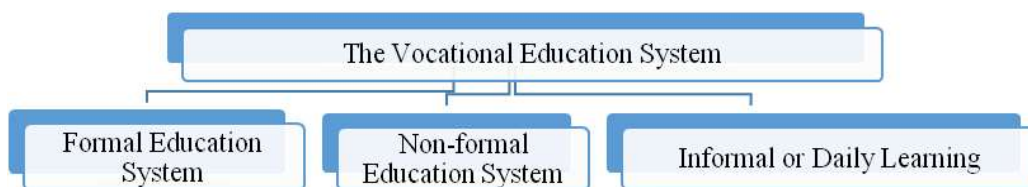


Figure 1. The Vocational Education System in Latvia. Source: MES (2018).

Vocational education competence centres and colleges, which includes all adult vocational education systems in their activities, play an important role in the implementation of high-quality and competitive adult vocational education. The authors have analysed the ways of acquiring vocational education, which are reflected in Figure 2.



Figure 2. Types of the acquisition of vocational education in Latvia. Source: NEOD (2018).

As practice shows, adults can participate in all forms of vocational education. The demand for higher education workers is currently dominating in the labour market. It can be said that by acquiring higher education a person at any age has more opportunities to adapt to social changes and, by raising his/her qualification or retraining, to integrate effectively into the labour market.

2. Trends of the Population Aging of Latvia

Europe and Latvia are affected by a significant population aging process, where older people are a valuable and often underestimated resource that can make a significant contribution to society. In Figure 3, the authors show the main indicators of the natural movement of the population in the period of 2011 – 2016.

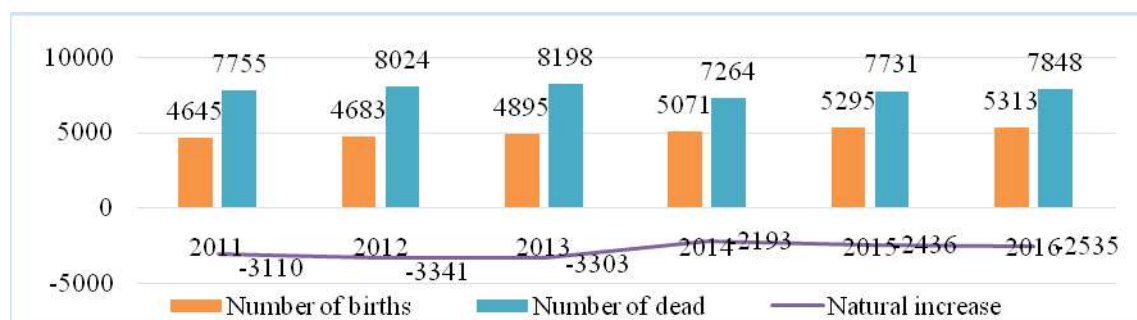


Figure 3. The main indicators of the natural movement of the population in 2011 – 2016. Source: CSB (2017)

Figure 3 shows that the natural growth in Latvia has been being negative since 2011. Changes in the number of population in Latvia in the period of 2011 – 2016 are reflected by the authors in Figure 4.

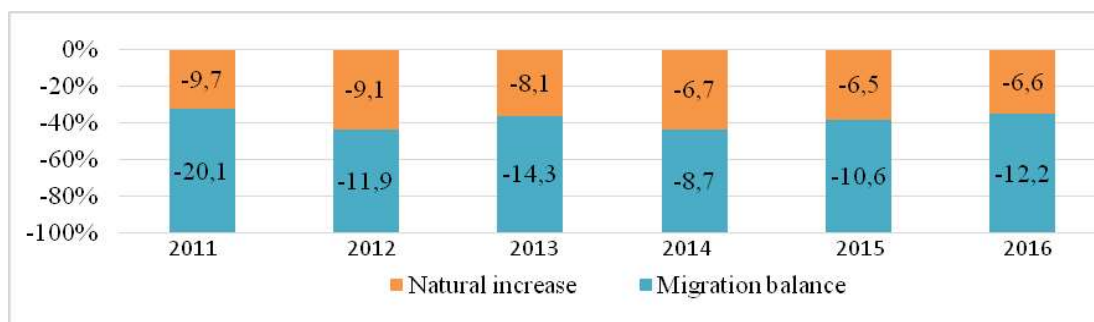


Figure 4. Changes in the number of population in 2010 – 2016, th. people.
Source: CSB (2017)

Since 2011, the number of population in Latvia has decreased by 170 thousand or 8%. Problems in a country arise when the population is unable to reproduce itself, which results in its aging. The population is aging, resulting in a ‘silver’ society, a special resource group that needs to be built up as a high-quality and competitive human capital.

3. The Role of Vocational Higher Education in Creating a High-Quality Business Environment

Environment

Professional higher education must be competitive in order to ensure a sustainable transfer of education to the business environment and to improve its quality. Given the importance of vocational higher education in the socio-economic aspect, the authors illustrate the relevance between competitive vocational higher education and the creation of a high-quality business environment as a driving force for the economic development and growth of the country.

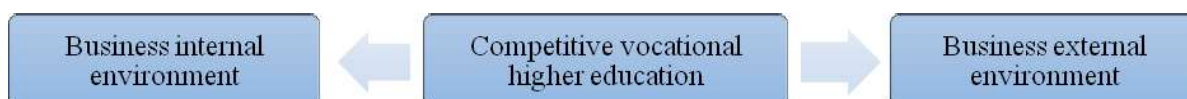


Figure 6. Relevance between the implementation of competitive vocational higher education and the quality of business environment. *Source: Created by the authors (2019).*

As a result of competitive vocational higher education, companies have access to high-quality employees and managers at different levels, ensuring more effective goals and promoting high corporate culture and ethics. Economically and financially stable companies are the basis for the country’s economic development and growth, which must be achieved in different demographic situations.

Conclusions

1. Analysing the vocational education system in Latvia, the following key conclusions:
2. Vocational education should be flexible in order to respond to the challenges of the national economy and demography.
3. There is a situation in the country where the macroeconomic goals have to be achieved through the implementation of ‘silver’ policies and economy, leading to adult education becoming one of the priorities.
4. In a situation where the development of the labour market is quality oriented but the population is aging and the number of people is decreasing, it is

important not to diminish the value of existing human resources.

Recommendations

The authors have developed a set of recommended measures for the implementation of high-quality vocational higher education in order to ensure the compliance of the existing workforce with the requirements of the national economy and labour market as a result of the population aging:

1. Adult vocational education must be directly included in the common education system. The inclusion of adult education in the education system requires the development of a new model of differentiated vocational education and the adjustment of curriculum content, taking into account the needs associated with adult education and their transfer to the business environment.

2. In the implementation of adult education at different levels, which should be a market-driven system, more emphasis should be placed directly on higher vocational or college education as workplace-based learning, because classical teaching methods and approaches are not always effective in the adult education, taking into account the needs of the adult audience.

3. The preparation of the workforce should be based on systemically developed cooperation between educational institutions, entrepreneurs, state and municipal institutions, which should result in the development of a model of cooperation between entrepreneurs and vocational education, which would prevent disproportion between education and labour market and ensure the existence of a high-quality business environment.

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