
The Development of a Strategy for Vocational Education and Training: experiences from Montenegro

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ABSTRACT This article addresses the problem that many countries lack a strategic orientation in reforming their vocational education and training (VET) systems, and therefore refers to the added value of a distinct VET strategy within an overall education sector strategy. To start with, the authors provide an answer to the questions ‘What is strategy?’ and ‘What is strategy in education?’ They argue that the ‘resource-based view of strategy’ is a suitable understanding of strategy because it has a developmental perspective and underpins the building of capacity and systems while making the most of core competences by stretching and leveraging them. Using core competences of social partners and other stakeholders is of crucial importance in VET development. By describing the process of developing a VET strategy in Montenegro, the authors provide a case study of putting strategy theory into practice. Concluding with lessons learned, they formulate recommendations.

Introduction

Many developing, emerging and transitional countries are reforming their vocational education and training (VET) systems in order to improve the employability of young people, and as a vehicle to strengthen the economic and social development of the country. The problems they are facing are manifold, and, according to Wallenborn (2010, p. 186), they include:

- an incoherent political framework and a lack of decentralisation and management policies for both formal and non-formal VET;
- poor VET performance in terms of quality, labour market relevance and organisational capabilities, and severe problems in implementing reforms and even smaller innovations;
- ineffective management and planning expertise and poor teacher and trainer performance.

In the process of changing and reforming, countries with emerging VET systems often seek international support and consultancy services. Quick-fix decisions (Phillips & Ochs, 2003) and uncoordinated activities have often been the result in the past. But it is not just the low degree of harmonisation between donors [1] that causes the slow progress and dissatisfaction with reform results.

Reasons can be found as well on the beneficiaries’ side. The lack of strategic orientation in the recipient countries frequently hinders the implementation of projects and programmes as well as their integration into the structures that are meant to be reformed. The heart of the problem is the general disregard of Alfred Chandler’s time-tested principle of strategy and organisation reform: ‘Structure follows strategy!’ (Chandler, 1962).

This article argues that a consistent and reasonably coordinated strategic orientation on the part of the partner country is a key to successful implementation of targeted reform measures. In other words, partner countries must be clear about what they need and want, and they must be aware of the resources and capabilities that they have and that they do not have. Consequently, an increasing number of countries are developing comprehensive education sector strategies – that encompass primary to tertiary learning, LLL and VET. These strategies differ from one another both in terms of their structure and with regard to their objective and quality.

To begin with, this article addresses the question: What is strategy in education? While this question has been the object of scientific research in the field of economics and business administration, it has rarely come up on the research agenda of the educational sector. What can we learn from the ‘neighbouring’ concepts, models and processes for VET strategy formulation and implementation?

In a second step, we are focusing on the question: What added value is provided by a distinct vocational education and training strategy? The added value has to be assessed according to strategy documents that already exist in a country. This is reflecting the fact that a strategy would be embedded in and emergent from a host of policy documents.

In the third section of this article the process of developing a VET strategy for Montenegro will be presented. The practical experiences from the cooperation of the Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training (BIBB) and the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) will be presented. Content and process of the VET strategy will be described as well as the challenges that came along, addressing an urgent need of the international VET research sector for more evidence-based findings to enable politicians and VET practitioners to better monitor the system.

What is Strategy?

It seems this question can be answered easily: a strategy helps to achieve selected objectives and goals. Strategy has been used since centuries – important military victories and defeats in history have been decided through strategy. But strategy as a tool of organisational leadership and as an object of social science research only dates back some 50 years – beginning with, among others, the pioneering work of the aforementioned Alfred Chandler. The question ‘What is strategy?’ will be answered first by outlining the understanding of strategy in business administration and management, which is where the study and practice of strategy originally began. Second, conclusions for the educational sector will be drawn. We argue that a concept of strategy for the education sector can be informed – to a certain extent – by strategy concepts from management and business studies.

The conventional view of business strategy is that it has the function to ‘achieve competitive advantage for an organization’ (Henry, 2008, p. 4). Competitive advantage enables a firm to meet customer needs better than its rivals. Ultimately, competitive advantage would lead to higher profitability. In this regard, finding the optimal position in an industry and in a market is the essence of strategy. Mintzberg (Mintzberg et al, 1998) has called this the ‘Positioning School’ of strategy.

This can be contrasted with the so-called ‘resource-based view’ (RBV) of strategy. It was popularised by Hamel & Prahal (1997), who argued that leveraging and stretching resources and competences is a better way to gain competitive advantage. Given the ever-increasing volatility of market environments in an age of globalisation, they maintain that, if properly developed, resources and competences of an organization are a much more sustainable base for advantage than positioning.

It is obvious that the resource-based view resonates well with many recent themes and aspects of educational reform - quality management, school improvement, school effectiveness, school culture, accountability, to name just a few. Similarly, there is a high degree of consonance between the resource-based view and the themes of capacity building and sustainability that have dominated the international education discourse for the past few years.

In *Strategy Safari*, Mintzberg et al (1998) present a taxonomy of ten ‘schools of strategy’ which they not only describe in detail but also submit to a tart critique. A summary of the ten schools is

presented in Table I. Most of the critique gets loaded on the ‘positioning school’, the ‘design school’ and the ‘planning school’. The authors find it preposterous to assume that in the real world of organisations and volatile environments, strategy-making would be a rational process with careful analyses, judicious choices and deliberately planned implementation. On the other hand, they accord much greater plausibility and credibility to the RBV which they do not yet present as a school of its own, but which they associate with their ‘cultural school’ and ‘learning school’.[2]

<p>1. The <i>Design School</i>: strategy formation is a process of conception</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emphasises matching internal resources with external opportunities • SWOT analysis is a central technique • Up to today the most influential view of strategy 	<p>6. The <i>Learning School</i>: strategy formation is an emergent process</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning is making sense of past experience; patterns of the past become plans for the future • Strategy depends on learning, learning depends on capabilities • Capabilities that are core competences lead to competitive advantage
<p>2. The <i>Planning School</i>: strategy formation is a formal process</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emphasises long-range formal planning and controlling • Is a specialised function of the strategy planning department • Requires internal and external stability 	<p>7. The <i>Power School</i>: strategy formation as a process of negotiation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emphasises political bargaining, compromising, coalition forming between conflicting individuals and groups • Because all organisations are political, strategies are never optimal • Political strategy formation tends to be emergent
<p>3. The <i>Positioning School</i>: strategy formation is an analytical process</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Based on economics - find a unique position in the market place • No need for tailored strategies - only a few generic strategies are required • Associated with consultancies and the notion that a trained strategist can be successful in any industry or sector 	<p>8. The <i>Cultural School</i>: strategy formation is a collective process of social interaction</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Culture (and ideology) do not encourage strategic change, they are a stabilising force • Culture is an important and valuable resource because it is not easily imitable → Cultural school assumptions are a premise of the <i>resource-based view of strategy</i>
<p>4. The <i>Entrepreneurial School</i>: strategy formation is a visionary process</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emphasises intuition, judgement, wisdom, experience, insight • It is not the person with capital who is important, but the person with ideas 	<p>9. The <i>Environmental School</i>: strategy formation is a reactive process</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • environment is the central actor • organisations must respond to external forces or else be selected out • leadership must read the environment and ensure proper adaptation
<p>5. The <i>Cognitive School</i>: strategy formation as a mental process</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focuses on the mind of the strategist • Subjectivist perspective • Emphasises cognitive bias and limited information processing capacity, e.g. group think 	<p>10. The <i>Configuration School</i>: strategy formation as a process of transformation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organisations are stable configurations of characteristics • Periods of stability are interrupted by transformations that lead to new configurations • The goal of strategy is ensuring stability

Table I. The ‘schools of strategy’.

This is fine because culture is an eminent and often valuable resource (not being imitable and not being substitutable) of any organisation, and because learning is both an important precondition to stretching and leveraging resources, as well as an important capability by itself.

The shift from the positioning approach to the resource-based view is an important step to make the strategy concept suitable for the management of educational systems. The resource-based view is developmental because of its emphasis on capabilities – which neatly translates into

'capacity' in the language of international development organisations. Further, it does not require a market environment, and therefore suits non-profit organisations as well. One should keep in mind, though, that simply striving for efficiency and effectiveness does not yet constitute a strategy.

Finally, the resource-based view of strategy is close to the development of the knowledge-based view of the firm that maintains that in the post-industrial service economy and in the information society knowledge is the most valuable resource of all. It is those organisations that can harness knowledge as an input and deliver superior knowledge as an output that can gain the greatest competitive advantage. This special twist on the resource-based view makes the strategy concept particularly suitable for the management of education systems and TVET organisations whose basic task is being processors and purveyors of knowledge.

Though in the education sector not much thought has been given to strategy, there are a good number of documents that carry the label 'strategy'. The understanding of strategy in education is still diffuse and ill-defined. If the goal of strategy is to assure an improved position for the strategy's subject, then one might go on to say that strategy is just as relevant for education systems as it is for business firms. But there are special aspects of the education systems that demand special attention:

- Despite the need for effectiveness, educational organisations generally do not pursue a competitive agenda. They serve societal and individual needs and they are dependent on financial resources from the state. The latter is especially of crucial importance for VET systems.
- Another distinctive feature is the 'systemic clumsiness' of education systems. To induce change in an education system is a mid-term to long-term undertaking. Structural and mental rigidities are the main obstacles to change in education systems, as has been learned to their cost by many transformation countries (Hoppe, 2011).
- Only a few systems actually possess the necessary monitoring instruments to achieve evidence-based information about their external and internal environments.

With regard to the aforementioned aspects of the 'resource-based view' on strategy, it becomes obvious that in reforming a VET system, the education strategy should be linked tightly to the existing structure of VET in the country. The prevalent claim to reform a VET system according to international role models (such as the German dual system) is first of all limited to the existing resources and competences, as well as to non-existing overall monitoring systems. The lack of evidence-based information on single aspects is of crucial importance in steering the necessity to rely on experience-based information.

What Added Value is Provided by a Distinct Vocational Education and Training Strategy?

Many countries develop numbers of policy documents during the course of their reform processes. As well as strategies, these documents also include national development plans and programmes which must be taken into account when designing specific projects with international implementation organisations. As Table II shows, around thirteen documents relevant to VET can be identified for Montenegro. Each of the documents makes its own contribution to the structuring of vocational education and training. They relate to the identification of areas of responsibility for individual sectors, to the political significance of sectors or to planned policy campaigns for the whole or individual parts of the VET system. The 'Strategic Plan for Education Reform (2005-2009)' has thus far served as the main document indicating the direction of VET reform.

The question arises as to which of these documents are accorded consideration in policy decisions relating to the structuring of the VET system in Montenegro at a national level, and which are relevant to project alignment by international implementation organisations. This in turn raises the issue of the added value provided by a distinct vocational education and training strategy.

The aforementioned number of documents related to VET shows its importance in the political endeavours to strengthen, develop and expedite the country. As well, it explains the growing need of the economic sector for a qualified workforce. For a range of different reasons, VET does not have high social appreciation and priority in many countries, and Montenegro is no exception. One strategic challenge is the need to legitimise vocational education and training vis-a-

vis higher education. This reputational deficit is something which is frequently encountered and needs to be addressed by appropriate measures relevant to VET and the labour market. Clear positioning compared with other educational sectors would send out a clear political signal to trade, industry and society, as well as facilitating strategic decision making and strategy implementation.

Policy documents in Montenegro

National Strategy on Employment and Human Resources Development for the Period 2007-2011
National Employment Action Plan for the Period 2010-2011
Civic Upbringing and Education Strategy (2007-2010)
Strategy for Integration of Persons with Disabilities in Montenegro for the Period 2008-2016
Human Resources Development – Montenegro 2017
Strategy of Life-long Entrepreneurial Learning (2008)
Human Resources Strategy for the Tourism Sector (2007)
Montenegrin Tourism Development Strategy by 2020
Montenegrin National Sustainable Development Strategy (2006)
Action Plan for Integration of Sustainable Development into the Education System for the Period 2007-2009
Montenegrin Agriculture and European Union – Development Strategy for Food Production and Rural Areas (2006)
Information Society Development Strategy (2004)
Strategic Plan for Education Reform (2005-2009)

Table II. List of selected documents relevant to vocational education and training.

Therefore, developing a distinct VET strategy would require a structural separation to be made between the VET sector and other education sectors. A country is only in a position to implement its own strategy if human resources and funding become available and institutional areas of responsibility are put in place. Since these prerequisites were already in place in Montenegro, it is possible to state without reservation that a vocational education and training system existed. For example, one of the initiated measures was the establishment of a distinct Vocational Education and Training Institute domiciled at the Ministry of Education.

The characteristics stated enable the derivation of two essential functions of a national VET strategy and thus allow the added value provided to emerge. A VET strategy serves policy makers, officials and international consultants in controlling decisions and measures (*control function*). It also facilitates the bundling of various interests and existing approaches (*coordination function*).

Control Function

In VET reform, the control function relates to the conscious pursuit of a chosen direction and the creation of references between individual activities as well as to the establishment of general framework conditions. In the case of Montenegro, the plethora of VET modernisation processes already initiated emerged as a consistent whole as soon as the strategy was drawn up.

We can also assume that, with a VET strategy in place, the speed of the course of reform picks up and reform efforts are pushed further. The difficulty frequently experienced in many countries is that VET systems resemble a 'patchwork system' due to political instability, economic reconstruction and the strong integration of external advisors from a multitude of backgrounds. The search for national identity and for connectivity within an international/European context has also meant that ongoing approaches need to be pursued further. The consequence of this is that a country's objective to become a member of the European Union exerts considerable effects on the prioritising of the individual activities.

Another question that arises within the context of this issue is whether a strategy itself can be used as a monitoring instrument for VET systems. The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines monitoring as follows: 'to watch and check something over a period of time in order to see how it develops, so that you can make any necessary changes'. The authors stipulate that a VET strategy is a monitoring instrument on the systemic level in a broader context, having the advantage that the assessment of the measured status quo is already benchmarked according to the envisaged system. Through announcing strategic objectives and breaking them down into specific tasks a strategy

provides a blueprint of the envisaged future. Necessary changes of the reform course can be directly targeted.

Coordination Function

Particular significance is ascribed to the integration of trade and industry into VET through the boards and top executives of the social partners. Experience demonstrates time and again that this cannot be statutorily directed and can only be realised via integration at strategic level and via the self-regulation aspired to in this regard. While cooperation between social partners is self-evident in Germany, in many partner countries such cooperation exists theoretically but not in the reality of their governance. The implementation of cooperative strategies between social partners, and between them and governments, is often poor. For this reason, a vocational education and training strategy should define respective areas of responsibility as well as the activities.

One difficulty which needs to be considered here is the fact that government offices in many countries are perceived in a personalised rather than in an institutionalised form. This also applies to a certain extent to Montenegro. The reason for this is the continuing high significance of informal networks. In conjunction with a high degree of fluctuation in political offices, this may lead to the loss of the binding character of the strategy. This problem can be at least partially alleviated via a public consultation for a draft strategy (see below). Experiences in other countries show that 'Individual educational policies are more easily understood if they make sense and connect with the broader picture' (ETF, 2008, p. 18). The coexistence of distinct policy documents and a national strategy is tolerable as long as these individual documents are subordinate to an overall policy framework – for example, VET strategy.

In summary, we may state that a vocational education and training strategy provides added value for all involved. This is not merely a result of the strategy itself. It also emerges from the process of negotiating the different interests, which is discussed in greater detail below. The Montenegrin Ministry of Education ultimately decided upon the development of a distinct vocational education and training strategy in order to emphasise the particular significance of VET reform within the context of employability skills and continuing training opportunities.

The Development of the Vocational Education Development Strategy for Montenegro

The aim of this section is to describe the development process of the Montenegrin Vocational Education Development Strategy 2010-2014 and the experiences gained along the way. Before embarking upon this task, however, a short introduction will be provided into the project activities in which the development of the strategy has been embedded.

The Reform of the Vocational Education and Training System in Montenegro

Since mid-2006, the German Development Cooperation (GIZ) [3] has been supporting the reform and modernisation of the vocational education and training system in Montenegro. Montenegro is a small state in the western Balkans located on the Adriatic coast.

The GIZ-VET project 'Job Promotion by VET' commenced work in mid-2006.[4] The main objective of the project is to improve the employability skills of those completing vocational education and training, via support measures for VET reform both at the macro level – advisory services for the Ministry of Education – and at the micro level – measures in vocational schools.

Reforming curricula is an essential area of cooperation within this project. During this process, representatives from the private-sector economy in Montenegro were involved for the first time in order to secure alignment of the new curricula with the requirements of the labour market. BIBB experts trained curriculum developers [5] in order to take greater account of the need for employability skills orientation. This took place on the basis of the training programme for automotive mechatronics technicians, an occupation newly introduced in Montenegro.

Parallel to this, a partnership was established between BIBB and the Montenegrin VET Centre. GIZ and BIBB experts collaborated closely in the field of capacity development to

strengthen the VET centre. Tasks and responsibilities of the staff members were analysed, and as a result, a strategy and action plan for staff development was created.

Teaching staff at vocational schools take on a particularly important role in the implementation of the reform endeavours at school level. For this reason, the GIZ-VET Project has invested in advanced training for teachers during the past four years. Over 250 teachers (teaching theory and/or practice) have undergone an intensive in-service modularised training cycle. These teachers are now in a position to apply the reformed curricula with an employment-oriented approach in their teaching. Selected vocational school teachers, university lecturers and research seminar lecturers from Germany all acted as partners for the transfer of know-how. Nationwide multiplication of this series of advanced training for all vocational teaching staff in four employment-intensive sectors (electrical engineering, mechanical engineering, tourism and construction) started at the beginning of 2010. In order to continue reform endeavours in a holistic manner, school management at pilot schools has been improved by using the EFQM (European Foundation for Quality Management) Model.

In 2009, the decision was taken by the partner ministry (Ministry of Education and Science) [6] to develop a vocational education and training strategy, and support from the GIZ-VET Project has been requested. The process was launched in May 2009 by national VET representatives acting in conjunction with advisors [7] from the Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training (BIBB).

The development of the vocational education and training strategy is classified into a series of further activities which were supported within the scope of the GIZ project. The good cooperation between the GIZ, the Ministry of Education/VET Centre and BIBB is a result of those aforementioned former joint projects. This has been crucial for the successful development of a vocational education and training strategy.

The process of developing the Vocational Education Development Strategy has been supported by BIBB consultants. However, the responsibility for the strategy's content alignment remained completely with Montenegro in order to secure 'ownership' and sustainability.

The Process

In May 2009, experts from BIBB were given the task of supporting the National Commission in the development of a vocational education strategy for Montenegro. The National Commission was chaired by a representative of the Ministry of Education. Within six months, the working group – which comprises representatives from the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Labour, the National VET Centre, the Employment Agency, the Chamber of Commerce and the Confederation of Trade Unions – had developed a strategy which was subsequently subjected to a public consultation process (see Figure 1). The process description below shows that those involved in the development of the national VET strategy have succeeded in fulfilling the democratic requirement in a number of areas.

The strategy was both presented to the (specialist) public as well as opened up for discussion in a total of five cities representing the respective regions of Montenegro. The strategy document proved very popular and received only a small number of minor amendments before being passed by the government as early as December 2009. At the conclusion of this process, design work began on the development of an action plan in February 2010. The action plan to accompany the strategy provides for the 'translation' of policy objectives into tasks to which areas of responsibility and a relevant financial framework are allocated in turn.

The main task of the external consultancy was to structure the VET policy measures selected by the Montenegrin side and reflect on the implications of these in terms of finances, human resources, system and feasibility. People situated outside the respective vocational education and training system usually find it easier to recognise overlaps, reduce complexity and illustrate the consequences. This protects the strategy from getting muddled by conflicting demands and ideas from process participants. Reflection on reality and what is feasible is recommended at regular

intervals within the strategy development process. The prerequisite for this is that the period for the implementation of the strategy is defined in advance.

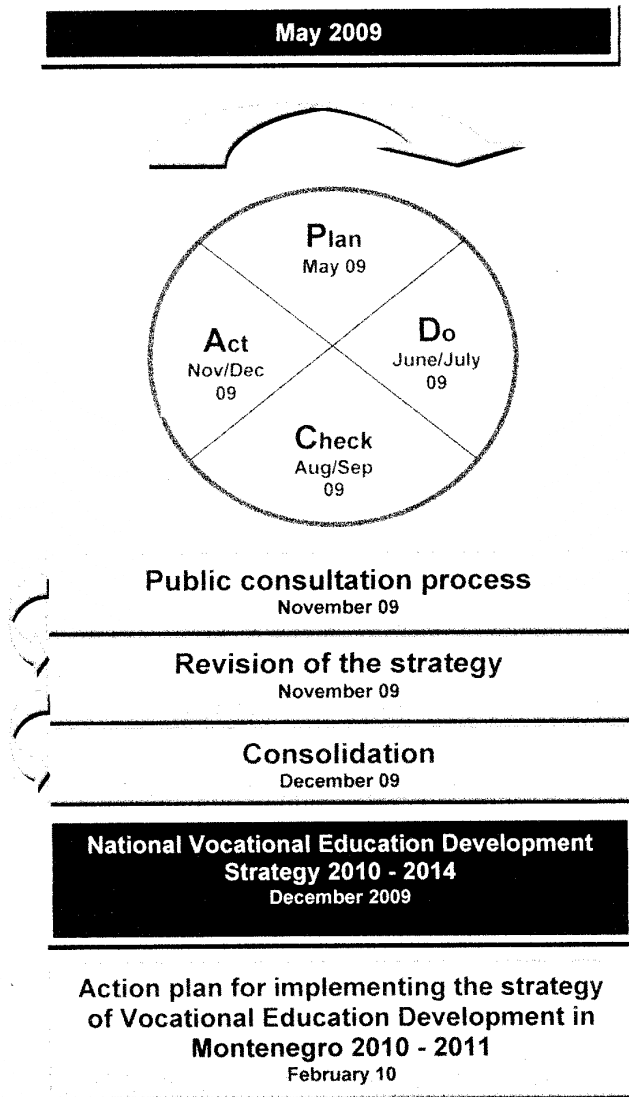


Figure 1. Structure of the process schedule in Montenegro.

The Vocational Education Development Strategy and the action plan can be seen as monitoring instruments to measure and follow up on the VET reform progress in Montenegro. In order to involve a different level of the VET system in designing the action plan, the composition of the working group in charge differed from the one that developed the strategy document. This time, representatives from VET schools were involved. The use of the Vocational Education Development Strategy and action plan should be seen as a policy guideline and is not limited to institutions of the Montenegrin education system. The strategic documents are also used by other ministries which are active in human resources development, such as the Ministry of Tourism, the Ministry of Labour and the Ministry of Agriculture. To mention some examples: the Montenegrin Vocational Education Development Strategy (2010-2014) was taken into consideration by the movement 'Local Partnerships for Employment and HRD in Montenegro' [8], as well as by the working group for developing the national career guidance strategy [9]; it was considered during the discussion about aligning the vocational education and tourism development strategies, as well

as about aligning the vocational education and agricultural strategies.[10] An extension to or expansion of the national Vocational Education Development Strategy can be recognised by the actual finalised North Montenegro Vocational Education Strategy 2011-2014 [11] (including the action plan).

Follow-up and monitoring of the Vocational Education Development Strategy is done on a regular basis. The structure of the action plan corresponds with the priority areas.[12] Again, representatives from VET schools are involved in the monitoring process. The monitoring reports are reviewed regularly and forwarded to the Ministry of Education on a yearly basis. In the case of the North Montenegro Vocational Education Development Strategy document, a special chapter has been added, focusing on monitoring and evaluation details. Institutions or groups, such as the school board, the parents' council, members of the local community and employers, are listed as needing to be informed about the monitoring results. As well as institutions/groups being listed there, evaluation instruments such as questionnaires, surveys, tests and checklists are also listed, and therefore indicators can be measured precisely.

The Elements and Contents

The aim was for the Vocational Education Development Strategy (a) to stipulate the objective of the policy endeavours; (b) to lay down a binding schedule; and (c) to structure the specific approach. A glance at the strategy documents of other countries (e. g. Bulgaria, Bosnia and Herzegovina or Albania) makes it clear that there are variations in the degree of complexity of elaborations and therefore in the binding character of the documents. At the very beginning of the process, those who are involved need to reach a decision with regard to the degree of specificity. The following needs to be taken into account within this process: the more detailed the statements are with regard to period of time, measures and associated measures, the smaller the opportunity for *ex ante* adaptation will be.

The decision to adopt a three-phase structure in Montenegro has resulted in a high degree of specificity. During the first phase, those involved initially agreed on a vision and a mission. This stipulated the fundamental direction of development. The guiding benchmarks included such aspects as vocational education and training in the European Union and the requirements of the national labour market. This laid the foundations for a second stage during which strategically relevant areas of the vocational education and training system were identified. A specific strategic objective and relevant tasks were then mapped out for these areas.

The following priority areas were developed in conjunction with the mission and vision:

1. Strengthening of the institutional and legal framework;
2. Strengthening of the social partnership;
3. Decentralisation;
4. Link to the labour market;
5. Admission rules for vocational education and training;
6. Quality (see Table III);
7. Financing of vocational education;
8. International cooperation.

The third stage of specificity, the drawing up of an action plan, was scheduled to take place after the consultation and consolidation process. The action plan defines relevant activities, success indicators, responsibilities, schedules and financing for the individual tasks.

Lessons Learned

The process of developing the Vocational Education Development Strategy 2010-2014 in Montenegro can be evaluated as a success. Within a short period of time the stakeholders (as members of the National Commission) have succeeded in reaching a consensus on the future priority areas in vocational education and training in Montenegro. In addition to this, the institutional representatives of the National Commission committed themselves to undertaking specific activities in the action plan supplementing the strategy.

Being aware of the different typologies and approaches of strategy, the authors of this article favour the RBV. We argue that the resource-based view of strategy is a more suitable foundation for a VET strategy than the positioning view because developing a VET system is not so much about competition, but rather is about building systems and capabilities. Especially in VET, the best use of resources and competences can be reached through the participation of social partners and other relevant stakeholders. Recognising their importance and managing the stakeholders' commitment to the chosen strategy is a key success factor for a VET strategy.

1. Level				
<i>Vision</i>				
'Develop Montenegro as a society of knowledge where vocational education, as the key factor of economic and social development, will be of high-quality, flexible, efficient, with the professional human resources who will have competitive knowledge, skills and competences and who will be qualified to take part in the labour market, where each individual has equal opportunities for personal and professional development.'				
<i>Mission</i>				
'Establishing a system of vocational education and training, developed in cooperation with social partners, which will produce human resources qualified for efficient work according to contemporary standards of education levels, which will facilitate personal and social development of each individual.'				
2. Level (example: assurance of vocational education quality)				
<i>Strategic objective:</i>		<i>Tasks: (e. g.)</i>		
'To establish a quality assurance system for vocational education at the national and school level.'		'To develop a methodological framework that supports the establishment and implementation of a quality assurance system at the national and school level.'		
3. Level (example: assurance of vocational education quality)				
<i>Tasks: (e. g.)</i>				
'To develop a methodological framework that supports the establishment and implementation of a quality assurance system at the national and school level.'				
<i>Activities (e. g.)</i>	<i>Success indicators</i>	<i>Institution in charge of activities/partners</i>	<i>Time framework/term</i>	<i>Funds source</i>
To form groups in charge of analysing and establishing a methodological framework	The group being formed	VTC/EC, EO, schools	Second quarter of 2010	
To analyse the current state, mechanisms of quality assurance and work of the group in charge of quality and educational/upbringing quality assessment	Reports, analyses, and recommendations applicable to the integral methodological framework meant for quality assurance	VTC/schools	Second and third quarter of 2010	

VTC – Vocational Training Centre

EC – Examination Centre

EO – Education Office

Table III. Three-level structure of the Vocational Education Development Strategy 2010-2014 in Montenegro.

The added value of a distinct vocational education and training strategy process primarily lies in the fact that with its help the stakeholders involved in a country's vocational education and training system reach a consensus on future VET policy measures. A national vocational education and training strategy also provides a clear guide for the planning of new projects to be realised with or without international implementation organisations. Based on this, the following recommendations are given:

1. Short-to-medium-term duration of strategy assures flexibility to adapt

A short-to-medium-term duration of the strategy process is to be recommended for VET systems under pressure to reform. The ongoing endeavour to change the education system in terms of structure, function and content requires flexibility on the political side. Long-term tying in of policy activities to a strategy document may prove negative under certain circumstances insofar as the changes involve such aspects as a change of government, budget cuts or changes to the institutional structure made at short notice. Short-to-mid-term tying provides an opportunity to evaluate the process in due time and instigate any adaptation measures which may be required.

2. The VET strategy should be closely matched to the overall assessment of strategic context

A strategy should not have the objective of reinventing a VET system or of realising the individual ideas of those involved. The success of a strategy stands or falls with how well the strategy fits with other education sector policies and strategies, its feasibility and its acceptability among the majority of stakeholders. To control the process by which various vested interests negotiate a consensus, external advisors for the evaluation of the strategy development process should be involved. This also supports ongoing reflection and the scrutiny of decisions and of the degree of complexity.

Finally, the authors would like to address the need for evaluation instruments to steer VET policy. Whether a VET strategy responds to the actual needs of the system very much depends on the available data. To turn the right adjustable screw to obtain the envisaged status quo requires having access to the respective information on the quality of VET as well as to information on quantitative progression lines. Most countries do not possess evaluation instruments in the form of overarching VET research to enable evidence-based policy formulation.

Notes

- [1] In March 2005, around 100 representatives from donor countries, partner countries and international organisations signed the 'Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness'. Under the terms of the declaration, five principles were agreed on a voluntary self-regulation basis including improved coordination of the activities of donor countries. (<http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/11/41/34428351.pdf>)
- [2] Besides Mintzberg's typology of ten 'schools', there are some other notable attempts at classifying the field: Johnson et al (1998-2008) speak of the 'four lenses' of strategy: 'strategy as design', 'strategy as experience', 'strategy as ideas', and 'strategy as discourse'. Similarly, Whittington (2000) has 'four perspectives': the 'classical', the 'evolutionary', the 'processual', and the 'systemic' perspective. The positioning school matches 'strategy as design' and the 'classical perspective', whereas the RBV comes close to 'strategy as experience'. An interesting perspective has been proposed more recently by Johnson et al (2007): 'strategy as practice'. This suggests that strategy is not just something that organisations have, but is also something that people in organisations do and make happen.
- [3] GIZ Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (formerly GTZ Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit).
- [4] Project duration (until the end of 2011).
- [5] Vocational school teachers, representatives from the National VET Centre and company staff have participated in the training to become a curriculum developer.
- [6] In 2011 the Ministry has been renamed as Ministry of Education and Sports.
- [7] Commissioned by GIZ.
- [8] This activity has been supported by the EU-funded project Labor Market Reform and Workforce Development.
- [9] The National Career Guidance Strategy has been supported by the EU-funded project Labor Market Reform and Workforce Development.
- [10] The alignment discussion between the stakeholders was facilitated by a project funded by the government of Luxembourg: Strengthening Vocational Education in North East Montenegro.
- [11] The 'North Montenegro Vocational Education Strategy 2011-2014' has been supported by a project funded by the government of Luxembourg: 'Strengthening Vocational Education in North East Montenegro'.
- [12] See Table III.

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