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EDUCATIONAL POLICY OF THE SLOVAK REPUBLIC IN THE CONTEXT OF CHANGES IN THE LABOUR MARKET: MEDIA DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

Eva Molnárová – Mária Rošteková*

ABSTRACT

Nowadays, education policies are mostly focused on the goals of transforming the school world. The arguments that the content of the education system in Slovakia should be changed are well known. The schools are not able to satisfy the demand for qualified staff. The article focuses on the present labor market needs related to vocational education and training (VET) in selected Slovak mass media discourses. The authors used the methodological model of discourse analysis - DIMEAN. To have a better understanding of the issue, it was necessary to outline the socio-political development of the last decade focused on legislative measures in the field of education, and to establish the essential theoretical basis of the research. The conclusions of the research show clearly that the topic of professionalisation of secondary education and the need to anticipate the development of the labor market are sufficiently published. However, the issues of increasing the attractiveness of VET and the number of graduates needed for the current and future labor market still remain urgent.

Key words: DIMEAN; Educational Policy; Labour Market; Media Discourse Analysis; Vocational Education and Training

Introduction

Current educational policies in developed countries are largely oriented towards the goals of transforming the school world. The arguments that the content of education system should change, are well known. Human resources are the most important asset of any state. They are essential for the creation and

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transfer of knowledge, and represent one of the factors that determine the innovative potential of companies. Investment in education is crucial for competitiveness, sustainable development and employment and has a significant impact on quality of life.

Many political and media statements in Slovakia point out that secondary schools and related institutions of tertiary education cannot meet the demand for skilled workers. Despite the fact that a certain discrepancy between the dynamically changing supply and demand in a market economy is considered to be a natural phenomenon, in Slovakia this inequality is perceived as too high (Učiace sa Slovensko 2017). According to the experts in the field of education, it is the sum of a number of problems: in particular, the lack of effectiveness of regulatory measures as a result of the lack of information on the employment of graduates in work and business, and the lack of information anticipating future economic and social development.

Political anticipation plays an important role in this respect. This tool, as going beyond conventional methods, seeks to predict the evolution of society by understanding the future and correctly assessing the various factors influencing the situation, or identifying breakpoints in current trends. Knowledge of the labour market is a strategic issue for all countries. The prospective analyses of labour markets are useful as much to the managers in charge of the public policies as to the various economic actors. All states seek to analyse their labour market(s) and anticipate their skill needs.

The challenge in Slovakia is finding solutions to transfer knowhow and information arising from reports, findings, and research into the content and methods of education and qualifications offered by schools. We can observe the lack of cooperation and involvement of institutions to networks and the lack of coherence between the various tools. While policy makers are making efforts to finance reform measures, the problem is that they are not always able to ensure the proper use or evaluation of results in the wider debate on the positive or negative consequences for education, training, and employment. In this area, there should be a debate with the wider public, stakeholders and social partner organisations. Media press and television should play a more active role in transmitting information to a wider audience.

We decided to dedicate this paper to the construction of grasping the anticipation of labour market needs and the related vocational education and training in selected Slovak mass media discourse. It is beneficial for social science research to see how the published media content is influenced on several

levels, despite the commonly proclaimed and partially expected impartiality (Dobřík, 2018). Thanks to various influences, it is possible not only to gain a good access to the research topic, which our society lives at a given time, but also ideally to look at various competing images of the world offered, e.g. by different types of print media that are often addressed to other target groups and determined by various power interests¹.

1 Slovak educational policy in the field of vocational education and training

We note that a functional vocational education and training (VET) system, as we know it from other countries, would bring many solutions to Slovak problems, as VET is designed to equip their participants with knowledge, knowhow, practical skills and/or competencies required on the labour market. VET basic element is a system of interconnection of vocational theoretical education at school with practical work-based training, but the relationship between them varies in different countries considerably.

In general, literature sources distinguish several types of VET built on different criteria, e.g. according to legislative standards, place of realization, relations between the labour market and education, according to the degree of stratification, resp. the importance of the role of the market and the state in the context of managing education itself. In its comparative studies, The European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (CEDEFOP), whose mission is to promote training and further training in the European Union, distinguishes three basic VET systems (CEDEFOP, 2012, p. 15):

1. Primarily in school education, where at least 75% of vocational education or practical training takes place at school, or in the school training centre;
2. the second system is based on workplace-based learning, with more than 75% of vocational education or practical training taking place directly in the work environment;
3. and the last, combined system, based on alternating school and work-based learning; a dual system or alternative programs where less than 75% of vocational education or practical training is carried out at school

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and the rest is carried out directly at the workplace, in a particular enterprise, etc.

Based on the observation of each system, advocates of VET across the EU put the emphasis on practical training directly by the employer, highlighting the effectiveness of this educational line due to a participants' successful transition from study into the workforce. As classical examples of powerful national VET systems are frequently given the highly institutionalized dual systems of Austria, Germany and Switzerland, which, in view of numerous studies (Ryan 2001, Steedman 2005, Euler 2013, Bank 2011, 2014) and widely available data are considered to be ideal forms of reconciliation of VET and labour market needs (CEDEFOP, 2013). Indeed, the dual system of VET foresees effective cooperation between employers and secondary vocational schools. It leads to a higher degree of interconnection between theoretical and practical school education and the specific needs of employers in the training of their future employees (Analysis of the dual education system 2018). This important tool makes it possible to reduce youth unemployment and/or to increase the employability of secondary vocational school graduates, where one of the main obstacles is the mismatch between the skills of secondary vocational schools and the needs of the labour market, respectively, employers².

In the context of the aforementioned typology, we could include the current system of VET in Slovakia among primarily based on school education. However, there have been recent efforts by the government to increase the flexibility of the education system in relation to labour market needs as well as to enable employers to participate actively in preparing pupils to meet their needs. The most important step in this respect is the adoption of the Vocational Education Act in 2015³, which aims to introduce a dual education system, modelled on the German, Austrian and Swiss systems.

The 2015 Act created the legislative framework and the necessary preconditions for its implementation but lacked the system for its implementation and continuity in building and coordinating in several areas. Its wording contains problematic provisions that create barriers to the development of VET (Analýza

² In the scientific literature in Slovakia, very little attention is paid to the research of public policies in the field of education. In the case of vocational education, this is even more striking. Exceptions are publications dealing mainly with the CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning) method, which is an important tool for meeting the needs of the labour market (Hurajová, 2017).

³ Cf. Zákon č. 61/2015 Z. z. o odbornom vzdelávaní a príprave a o zmene a doplnení niektorých zákonov, a ktorým sa menia a dopĺňajú niektoré zákony.

systému duálneho vzdelávania, 2018). This reflected the fact that the necessary dynamic involvement of individual entities in the system has not occurred since the beginning of the system implementation. Therefore, the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic prepared an amendment of the Act on vocational education, approved in June 2018, with effect from September 2018 (Analýza systému duálneho vzdelávania, 2018).

Of course, both professional and lay discussions on vocational training have transferred to the media discourse. We have observed some facts relating to the failure of the system to meet the needs of the labour market. For example, lack of pupils in these schools, lack of information for applicants, and the low interest of companies to engage in vocational training, not always satisfactory curriculum that would meet expectations of practice, low attractiveness of study programs, insufficient participation of employers, etc.

2 Theoretical bases of media discourse analysis

In the context of our research, we perceive discourse itself as a complex cognitive-communication phenomenon. It includes not only the text itself, but also various extralinguistic factors (knowledge of the world, opinions, and value orientations) which are important for understanding and perception of information. We started with text corpora, which are compiled based on certain content (or semantic) criteria, common (macro) theme and texts come at the same time. These are texts, respectively a set of texts that can be combined based on their common attributes and contextually involved in a particular social and cultural environment (Lauková, 2017). All texts are also part of the media (macro) genre.

Analysing this discourse, we worked with corpus texts containing the keyword *education*. The lexeme *education* is by its nature a neutral expression; thus, has no significant positive or negative connotations while ensuring the corpus compilation with a wider content delimitation of the examined discourse. Furthermore, these texts are limited to 2015, 2016 and 2017 years. We consider these years as important milestones, as in 2015 the first important Act on dual education was adopted, in 2016 the national project of Dual Education was launched, and 2017 was the first year of its complete implementation, and the first results in practice were expected. The years 2003, 2008 and 2014 were chosen for the relevant control quantitative comparison.

All texts are part of the sub-corpus of journalistic (informative) texts of the Slovak National Corpus prim-8.0-public-inf in the range of 1,009,613,215 tokens

and 791,376,893 words. The advantage of using selected parts of the already finished corpus, which the teams of experts worked on, is both the quality of its processing and the possibility of using several author programs (e.g. statistical analysis of collocations, etc.), which can be helpful in research and qualitatively improve the work with the examined material. The Slovak National Corpus (SNC) is an annotated corpus (containing information about the author, source, date, type of text), which is tagged at the level of the texts, so during the analysis we can easily move from concordances to the whole texts. Another advantage is the lemmatisation of the corpus so that a common representative unit is assigned to all shapes of the flexible lexeme.

Sub-corpora created in SNC can also be considered representative in terms of scope, thus avoiding another frequent weakness of quantitative analysis in discourse analysis, although in our case the corpus' representativeness is also supported by its genre homogeneity. Our sub-corpora meet the criterion of **P. Baker** (2008), which, when constructing (sub) corpora, is based on the media type criterion (a type of newspaper = tabloid newspaper, large-format newspaper ...). The sub-corpus of journalistic (informative) texts of the Slovak National Corpus prim-8.0-public-inf contains both national and regional print titles. For our research, this is an important criterion. It can affect its outcomes due to the regional diversity of anticipation of the dual education theme, which is influenced by local labour market developments, supply and demand concepts, but also by the system and legislation of vocational education. Secondary schools (general (grammar) schools, specialised secondary schools, secondary vocational schools, apprentice training centres, and conservatories) are established by self-governing regions after approval of the relevant central body of state administration and social partners. Similarly, the Ministry of Education through a higher territorial unit (HTU) allocates funds to schools. In the past, however, HTUs (VUC in Slovak version) in education did not always respond to labour market needs. Nevertheless, today they are expected to monitor labour market conditions and forecasts more precisely and identify specific vocational study fields accordingly. That is why these facts should also be examined in the regional press.

We use the methodological model of the DIMEAN multi-level discourse analysis (Spitzmüller, Warnke, 2011), that allows us to orientate in discourse. It is a methodical procedure, according to which we can systematise the basic conditions of empirical research. This methodology combines both language-related analysis and cognition-related analysis while defining actors as the main

dimension of discourse. The model distinguishes the trans-textual plane (knowledge, cognition), the intra-textual plane (texts) and the actors (acting, active persons). The central position of the actors corresponds to the thesis that actors contextualize language in a state of knowledge and articulate knowledge through language. They are active actors in discourse who regulate and pass on knowledge. They are acting persons with certain social roles, which are determined by possible conditions of statement and they create such determinants through their own statements (Spitzmüller, Warnke, 2011). According to this model, our research will concentrate on the IntraText level, namely on textual and lexical analysis.

In the lexical analysis, in addition to the frequency analysis of individual lemmas, we also focus on the qualitative and quantitative analysis of collocations. According to M. Ivanova (2018, p. 13), "Studying collocations is a different approach to the research of multi-word names. It is based on the co-occurrence of words - that is, the fact that certain words assume each other, one word occurs more frequently than it is statistically likely to collocate with another word, e.g. final decision, resulting effect, etc."

The advantage of the SNC corpus is that it can identify these co-occurrences using certain statistical tools. When searching through the collocation feature, we rely on the keyword and identify the most frequent right and left collocations in the corpus, adjacent words, based on the specified range. Therefore, we consider collocation a statistically demonstrable co-occurrence of two words within the range determined by us, while the collocation may not be contacted, i.e. the words may not be in close proximity within the concordance (Kolečáni Lenčová, 2016).

We further supplement the quantitative analysis with the analysis of the most frequent lexemes in individual corpora, which we then compare. The statistically significant lexemes also have a qualitative information value about the ongoing discourse on dual education, as they demonstrate the fact that the choice of specific lexical and syntactic means makes it possible to present a specific linguistic picture of a given macro-theme.

3 Political anticipation of dual education in media discourse

In terms of theoretical considerations in the first part of the paper, the focus of our research is the linguistic grasp of "dual education" as a socio-cultural phenomenon. As we explore this topic in media discourse, we use discourse analysis methods that are complemented by corpus methods. The involvement

of corpus methods in discourse analysis brings advantages because we can work with more texts and a complex multifunctional tool compared to a readily available source of materials. Working with corpora provides not only qualitative analysis but also extensive quantitative analysis, which, according to **G. Mautner** (2015, p. 180-204), represents a benefit especially in the field of data representativeness. A purely qualitative discourse analysis is often carried out on texts that are chosen rather based on their atypical nature, thus clearly distorting the research.

In the first step of our analysis, we focused on the semantic delimitation of the sub-corpus of journalistic (informative) texts of the SNC, because only texts with the theme of education were relevant to us. For this reason, we sub-corpused the search for lemma *education* (in Slovak *vzdelávanie*). We obtained the following quantitative data, with the material representing 791,376,893 words examined in 2015, 2016, and 2017. The years 2003, 2008 and 2014 were chosen for the purpose of the quantitative comparison.

Table 1 Lemma education (number of occurrences)

	2003	2008	2014	2015	2016	2017
Education (in Slovak vzdelávanie)	1,838 (1.82/mil)	4,787 (4.74/mil)	1,039 (1.03/mil)	3,635 (3.6/mil)	2,784 (2.76/mil)	1,039 (1.03/mil)

The first figure in the Table 1 represents the number of occurrences of the lemma *education* in the examined sub-corpus in a given year. In brackets, we present the absolute value of the frequency, which has been converted to a million words to maintain the objectivity of the comparison. The number of occurrences of lemma *education* in the individual examined years showed that in the media discourse in Slovakia the topic of education is permanent. Increased interest in the issue can be observed in 2015 (3,635, i.e. 3.6/million), 2016 (2,784, i.e. 2.76/million) and 2008 (4,787, i.e. 4.74/million), which confirms the merits of the delimitation of our corpus and the focus of the main quantitative and qualitative research. The following narrower semantic delimitation of the sub-corpus by adding a collocator *vocational* (in Slovak *odborné*) to the lemma *education* is a confirmation of our conclusions.

Table 2 Lemma education and collocator vocational (number of occurrences)

	2003	2008	2014	2015	2016	2017
Vocational education (in Slovak odborné vzdelávanie)	34 (0.03/mil)	285 (0.28/mil)	370 (0.37/mil)	284 (0.28/mil)	176 (0.17/mil)	76 (0.08/mil)

The increased incidence of collocation *vocational education* in 2008 (see Table 2) is due to extralinguistic factors, which may include the launch of regional operational programs; Structural funds within the EU, lifelong learning, increasing popularity of the University of the Third Age, etc. However, not every vocational education takes the form of dual education. This collocation does not occur at all in the corpus examined in 2003 and 2008 (see Table 3), which only confirms the above conclusions. The highest occurrence of collocation *dual education* (in Slovak *duálne vzdelávanie*) was recorded in 2016, the year of launching the national project Dual Education. Only 16.67% lower occurrences were recorded in the previous year 2015 when the first significant dual education law was adopted. In 2017, the first comprehensive year of implementation of the project Dual Education in Practice, the number of occurrences of the examined collocation decreased by up to 71.47%, which was not expected in the year when the first results were to be realised in practice.

Table 3 Lemma education and collocator dual (number of occurrences)

	2003	2008	2014	2015	2016	2017
Dual education (in Slovak duálne vzdelávanie)	0	0	106 (0.10/mil)	295 (0.29/mil)	354 (0.35/mil)	101 (0.10/mil)

A quantitative analysis of typical lexical units that are used to the linguistic expression of discourse themes throughout the completely examined sub-corpus also has relevant meaningfulness. For this reason, we have decided to examine the most frequent word forms in our sub-corpus.

We analyse the significant lexemes in the sub-corpus, omitting the lemma *education*, as this was used to define the sub-corpus itself. The most common nouns in all texts are *schools*, *pupils*, *year* and *Slovakia* (in Slovak *školy*, *žiaci*,

rok, Slovensko). They are followed by the nouns: *company, teacher, work, upbringing, system, graduate, mechanic* and *employer* (in Slovak *spoločnosť, učiteľ, práca, výchova, systém, absolvent, mechanik, zamestnávateľ*) and in the 2016 texts, it is the noun *a firm* (in Slovak *firma*). These are supplemented by the adjectives *dual, medium (secondary)* and *professional* (in Slovak *duálny, stredný, odborný*).

It has already been found in the content analysis of the sub-corpus that the vast majority of articles in some way refer to the specific secondary schools involved in dual education. In general, this is a discourse that mainly concerns secondary vocational schools and their cooperation with “practice”, which is represented by specific firms and companies (high occurrence of lexemes *firm* and *company* in the examined corpus), or unions of employers of Slovakia. To a lesser extent, the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic, or its particular representatives, are also actors in the discourse. For example, the article titled *Auto Becchi will engage in dual education*:

Certificates of competence to provide practical training in the dual education system at the practical training workplace were handed over to Auto Becchi Company and seventeen other companies from the Žilina Region. [...] “In 2009, our company opened the sales and service of Fiat and Alfa Romeo vehicles on Salesian Street. Since this year, we have been working closely with the Secondary Vocational School of St. Jozef Robotník in Žilina. During the whole school year, we always have at least two apprentices in the study field of car mechanics. So I believe that we will continue working with the Salesians in the dual education system and we will prepare together an interesting offer that will motivate students to study and gain real practice in our company”, says Branislav Jakubov, CEO of Auto Becchi Company.

(MY Žilina paper. Bratislava: Petit Press, 2016, vol.17, no. 07).

The examined discourse also includes the theme of cancelling and joining secondary schools with the aim of improving the quality of education. It is relevant for all types of secondary schools. The examined corpus is dominated by texts in which, in particular, school heads appeal to their sensitive, thoughtful and prudent regulations. *“If the number of schools is higher than adequate for a longer period of time, the process of general degradation in the quality of education will start, and this is happening”,* said recently Senior Chief

School Inspector. Headmasters themselves are also cautious about adjusting secondary schools. *"School abolishment is a sensitive matter, no one wants to go to this,"* says Peter Papík, the principal of the Secondary Technical School of Transport in Trnava. Helena Pašiaková, a long-time principal of the bilingual Tisovec Lutheran High School, also says that until the reform of the structure of regional secondary schools, pupils will not be thirsty for quality.

"If number of schools is too much of a good thing for a longer period of time, the process of general degradation in the quality of education will start, and that's what is happening," said senior school inspector Viera Kalmárová.

Principals themselves are also cautious about adjusting secondary schools. "School cancellation is a sensitive matter, no one wants to go to this," says Peter Papík, principal of the Secondary Technical School of Transport in Trnava. Also Helena Pašiaková, a long-time principal of the bilingual Evangelical High School in Tisová, says that pupils will not be keen on quality until there is a fundamental reform in the composition of secondary schools in the regions.

(SME. Daily paper. Bratislava: Petit Press, 2017, vol. 25, 20.01.2017)

Furthermore, we supplement our research with statistical collocation analysis. This helps us identify which word combinations are most common in discourse. At the same time, we reveal significant regularities in the use of word combinations. It is a systematic evaluation of the typical contexts of a certain lexeme. Statistical means are used to evaluate the frequencies at which lexemes occur in a defined neighbourhood of the sought lemma. We start from the fact of co-occurrence, i.e. certain words are supposed to be mutually assumed, which means that one word occurs in conjunction with another more often than is statistically probable. We also took into account T-score and MI score, i.e. special features describing the co-occurrence of words.

Table 4 Collocators to the lemma *education* with the highest number of occurrences

	Collocator	2015 (number of occurrences)	2016 (number of occurrences)	2017 (number of co- occurrences)
1.	Dual (in Slovak <i>duálny</i>)	289	355	99
2.	Vocational (in Slovak <i>odborný</i>)	245	153	100
3.	Upbringing (in Slovak <i>výchova</i>)	254	179	65
4.	Quality (noun) (in Slovak <i>kvalita</i>), quality (adjective) (in Slovak <i>kvalitné</i>)	106	55	31
5.	Preschool, pre-primary (in Slovak <i>predškolské, predprimárne</i>)	37	60	8
6.	System (in Slovak <i>systém</i>)	-	40	43

It is clear from the table that the most common collocators to lemma *education* are collocators *dual* and *vocational*. The occurrence rate is high during all three-research years. This is the same in the context of vocational and dual education as well as in the texts concerning other forms of education. The fourth most common collocators to the lemma *education* were the collocators *quality (noun)* and *quality (adjective)*. The collocators *preschool* and *pre-primary* are related to the protracted theme of introducing compulsory preschool attendance for children over 5 years of age. The collocator *system* was mainly associated with the examined theme of dual education, e.g.:

[...] *Pupils receive more days of vocational training in the company than it has been until now. We believe that there will be a better specialization of students for the company needs. Representatives of companies often address us, inquire about the conditions of dual education system, and are increasingly interested in preparing pupils in the dual system. This is a novelty for pupils and parents, but they are gradually showing interest and learning about the possibilities. Other companies in the region are gradually joining dual education as well.*
(MY Kysuca paper. Bratislava: Petit Press, 2016, vol. 17, no. 03)

Also in other texts of the examined sub-corpus, companies' interest in dual education shows only in a positive light, we could talk about a positive stereotype.

In our research, we further focused on what texts and contexts contain the significant lexemes and which collocators they associate with. In the researched sub-corpus, the lexeme *graduate* (in Slovak *absolvent*) occurs with the collocator *quality* (adjective), *qualified*, *young*, *successful*, *ideal*, *schools*, *of secondary vocational school*, *of three-year study programmes* (in Slovak *kvalitný*, *kvalifikovaný*, *mladý*, *úspešný*, *ideálny*, *školy*, *strednej odbornej školy*, *trojročných študijných odborov*). Most of these collocations occurred in regional journals and thus in the context of specific educational facilities:

[...] Ján Jamrich, Principal of the Secondary Vocational Technical School in Vrable: „Industrial companies are interested in highly qualified and quality graduates. Secondary Vocational Technical School offers study fields with graduation, as well as apprentice studies.

(MY Nitra paper. Bratislava: Petit Press, 2015, vol. 24, no. 38)

Additionally, in the following text the theme of the link between education and practice and the positive anticipation of dual VET by employers and applicants for study resonates:

“[...] 3rd year students were already preparing at our company's workplaces and lines, and a year later we put the first graduates into practice,” said Jan Schumera, BSH Drives and Pumps CEO. “The company does not regret that it has started. [...] It was worth it, in those four years of study, we can find out which pupil is suitable for what position. Then we can hire him. “In recent years, the company has seen enormous interest in dual education.

(MY Zemplin paper. Bratislava: Petit Press, 2017, vol. 3, no. 08)

The following is a verbal manifestation of the positive anticipation of dual VET by local authorities:

“Dual education is one of the hopes that will help to improve the quality of education, but mainly it will help the graduates' employability in the labor market,” said Tibor Mikuš, a region administrator of Trnava.

(MY Newspapers of the Southwest: Šaľa, Galanta, Dunajská Streda. Bratislava: Petit Press, 2016, vol. 25, no. 24)

Following texts are examples of solving the issue of employment participation of dual system graduates from VET schools:

The Secondary Vocational School of Mechanical Engineering in Kysucké Nové Mesto presents the work and skill of their own pupils in the Catalog of Products and Services of secondary school students. Study of the art and handcrafted quality of metals - blacksmith and locksmith work requires not only skill but also talent. Thanks to a specific focus, its graduates have no problem with employment.

(MY Kysuce. Bratislava: Petit Press, 2017, vol. 27, no. 08)

Graduates of the new field of study mechatronics find employment directly in the Ružomberok pulp and paper plant. However, students from other study fields also have the opportunity to acquire practical skills directly in production under the guidance of experienced company staff [...].

(MY Liptov paper. Bratislava: Petit Press, 2017, vol. 68, no. 05)

Finally, we present the text that is modelled by several bearing lexemes, respectively collocations in the examined discourse. Examples include school, secondary school, apprenticeship, pupil, employment participation, labour market, graduate, founder, and self-governing region (in Slovak *škola, stredná škola, učebný odbor, žiak, uplatniteľnosť, trh práce, absolvent, zriaďovateľ, samosprávny kraj*):

Often overlooked information when choosing a school is employability in the labour market. Graduates from several fields of study are high in demand in the market, but interest in studies is minimal. On the contrary, many of the schools requested by parents have already filled the market with their graduates and many of them remain unemployed. The self-governing regions have data on the labour market as the founders of most secondary schools.
(MY Banská Bystrica paper. Bratislava: Petit Press, 2015, vol. 9, no. 46)

Conclusion

In our research, we focused on anticipating the development of secondary VET in Slovakia, which should be based on the situation on the labour market.

To have a good grasp of the issue it was necessary to outline the socio-political development of the last decade with a focus on legislative measures in

the field of education and to establish the basic theoretical background of our linguistic research. When applying research methods in media discourse, we focused on national as well as regional journals.

We concluded that the discourse on anticipating labour market needs and the need for reform of VET education was featured in a nationwide newspaper, while the SME daily was most represented in the corpus. In regional newspapers, more space is devoted to anticipating local market needs, and VET is a frequently analysed topic. The regional weekly MY (e.g. Kysucké, Topolčianske, Žilina, Trenčianske noviny, etc.) had the largest representation in our corpus.

The main players in the discourse are the firms and companies that are involved or are interested in engaging in dual VET systems and specific schools, especially secondary vocational schools. The main players are named with the company name, respectively school, or are specified through their individual representatives. Other actors of the discourse are national unions and organisations representing employers and the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic, or its particular representatives. In addition to representative speech, acts and directives also characterise the discourse of these actors.

The results of the research show that the topic of dual VET is important in the social discourse in Slovakia and in the given time period (2015-2018) it had sufficient space in the Slovak press. In our opinion, several important factors have contributed to this, such as the urgent need for reform of the education system at the national and European level, the related European recommendations reflected in the Slovak legislative framework, and a direct link between the quality of VET and the national economy. The above facts have an impact on the pace of economic growth in every country, but probably also the increased interest of the Slovak public in education policies.

The conclusions of our research clearly show that there is sufficient media coverage of the topic of professionalisation of secondary education and the necessity of anticipating the development of the labour market. However, questions of increasing the attractiveness of VET and the number of graduates needed for the current and future labour market remain urgent. The challenge is also to introduce innovative programs linked to practice at the tertiary level of education, which we would like to pursue in further research.

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Zákon č. 61/2015 Z. z. o odbornom vzdelávaní a príprave a o zmene a doplnení niektorých zákonov a ktorým sa menia a dopĺňajú niektoré zákony.

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