A Study on the Effective Usage of Applied Courses in Furniture and Decoration Programs

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Abstract

Skilled manpower is considered as one of the basic factors that contribute for productive, production-based, and growth-oriented economies. For this reason, in 21st century, skilled manpower is accepted as one of the factors that carries the businesses one step ahead in a competitive environment. Maximizing the skilled manpower is possible with the systematically planned, applied and industry-indexed vocational technical education. One of the basic sectors of developing economies is furniture sector and applied training has a vital importance in terms of providing skilled manpower. Vocational technical education in Turkey at the level of higher education is carried by vocational schools in associate degree, and also carried out by high schools and technical education faculties in bachelor degree. With the furniture and decoration programs in vocational schools, it is intended to train skilled intermediate staff (furniture technician) needed by the sector. In this study, the current status of the vocational technical education at the level of higher education is analysed and especially the problems experienced in applied training are intended to present. In conclusion part some suggestions are presented which will contribute the development of workshops, practice laboratories, and technical conditions. In addition, it will also present some suggestions concerning increasing the skill level of the entire working and ready to work population. Furniture sector is preferred as base sector of this study therefore the study is carried out on effective usage of applied courses in furniture and decoration departments in associate level.

Keywords: Vocational Technical Education, Furniture and Decoration Program, Applied Training;

1. Introduction

Since Turkish furniture sector has become as a demanding professional field, the need for manpower and its quality is considered as a critical input. Every year, many people graduate from furniture and decoration programs of vocational schools to work in the same sector. Furniture sector has been developing day by day especially due to...
its export potential in last ten years, its usage of existing production technology, increasing rate of skilled manpower employment, increasing export opportunities and companies. It is a sector that Turkey is particularly competitive internationally and it creates a new brand.

Vocational schools, which create the source of employment by taking part in the production department of furniture sector, should take the role of social responsibility to train active and sufficient skilled (strategic) manpower by developing joint programs and projects.

The university is primarily defined as an institution that creates the manpower needed by the sector and for this reason it should be under the control of sector. Therefore, this definition forms the main perspective of new tendency in academic education in our country (Çakır and Çinar, 2010). Education itself is defined as all the studies that carried out for training a person according to a plan and goal, and also for developing mental and physical health by protecting him (Karabacak, 2006).

2. The Sectoral Importance of Furniture and Decoration Programs

Vocational schools provide and create skilled manpower that has the accumulation of the technological knowledge for furniture sector and in these schools the researches are needed about the structural conditions of the furniture and decoration programs. It is aimed that the training is carried out as on-the-job training upon sectoral analyses in order to develop skilled manpower.

According to 2012 statistics of the general industry and companies, there are 51,164 companies and 196,966 people work in these companies in Turkey. Although the sector does not have current account deficit in last ten years nor the problem of employment, it takes place at the bottom in preference lists due to lack of publicity. Furniture sector is an important production branch in Turkey and it is also important to be carried out technical training under the same title by vocational schools in higher education degree.

Industrial institutions report as essential requirement that workers, being described as skilled manpower, should have production knowledge and skills in addition to the capability to follow technology (Binici, 2014). Since furniture and decoration program is the only vocational school program to provide training for furniture sector, the graduates of this program do not confront any problems in finding job as intermediate staffs (furniture technician) and the program will accelerate the development of sector in accordance with its purpose.

With Professional Competency Institution Law, in relation to vocational schools, furniture and decoration programs also should form a mission in accordance with the objectives below (İşsevenoğlu and Geçoğlu, 2011).

- Updating the curriculum by the help of the instructors who has gained sufficient experience on wood and furniture sector
- Adapting the curriculum according to the demands and the developments of furniture sector
- Providing cooperation in different fields by developing relations between the sector and furniture decoration programs
- Observation should be done by choosing sample companies, new management techniques, technology and applications should be incorporated to furniture decoration program.

3. Furniture and Decoration Programs of Vocational Schools in Turkey and The Effective Usage of Applied Training

Vocational schools are criticized because of their current status, since they do not have the sufficient capacity to respond immediately the developments needed by the today’s information society and they are subjected to drastic changes according to the needs of the imperialist division of labour (Kılıç ve Ceyhan, 1998; Kavi, 2007).

Vocational schools have a highest rate among Turkish Higher Education structure. In parallel with, the number
of furniture and decoration programs in vocational schools has rapidly increased in accordance with the sectoral need for skilled manpower, the regional features and the demands of developing sector in any regions.

Furniture and decoration programs in vocational schools provide two-year education. Candidates of the program can attend these schools with entering exam or without exam after taking technical high school education depending on certain procedures. After graduation, they can work as production supervisor, machine operator, and quality controller, designer etc.

In Turkey, there are 176 public and private universities. 66 furniture and decoration programs provide formal training in vocational schools within the body of these universities. The data related the distribution by region of the vocational schools and furniture and decoration programs in Turkey are obtained from 2012 Student Selection and Placement Center guide.

**Table 1**
The number of vocational schools consisting in public and private universities according to regions and the percentage distribution of the Furniture and Decoration Programs and Material and Material Processing Technologies Programs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>REGION</th>
<th>PUBLIC UNI. VOC. SCHOOLS</th>
<th>PRIVATE UNI. VOC. SCHOOLS</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>MATERIAL PROCESSING TECHN. PROGRAM</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>FURNITURE AND DECORATION PROGRAM</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MARMARA</td>
<td>127</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>176</td>
<td>22.7</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>14.7</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CENTRAL ANATOLIA</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>9.2</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BLACK SEA</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>15.6</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>15.7</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>13.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MEDITERRANEAN</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>8.3</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>13.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AGEAN</td>
<td>129</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>137</td>
<td>17.7</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>15.3</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>10.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOUTHEASTERN ANATOLIA</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>10.4</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>17.2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The regional distribution of furniture and decoration programs within the body of vocational schools in Turkey is shown at Table 1. The Black Sea Region ranks first with 16 furniture and decoration programs. Aegean Region ranks second with 15 programs. South-eastern Anatolia Region ranks last with fewest programs. Marmara is the region that vocational schools are extensive.

The curriculum in furniture and decoration programs should be updated according to the needs of the professional world. Applied courses will be more effective by combining the technical knowledge by using machines in workshops with the production-based knowledge and skills. Besides, since the students are continuously engaged in application, they will increase their sense of responsibility, self-confidence and group work skills. With applied training, students will acquire the conditions of professional life beforehand; they will see their potential and recognize their skills. Students in the program will also have the opportunity for carrier planning to shape their future.

With the effective and proper usage of applied courses (workshop courses) in furniture and decoration programs students:

- are able to keep step with developing technology
- are able to specialize in maintenance and repair of furniture and equipage
- are able to have personnel quality needed by industry
- are able to use the equipment and endowment materials required by developing technology in most effective and productive way.
- are going to gain skills in terms of the order of the workshops and laboratories
With the effective and proper usage of applied courses (workshop courses) in furniture and decoration programs, the basic principles below are considered as essential at workshops:

- carrying out relevant applications concerning laboratory and technical courses
- being well-ordered and well-organized
- keeping accessible for training application for the whole day and the whole year
- carrying out educational and production processes as a whole
- planning workshop studies according to its aims
- carrying out educational and production activities in real workplace environment
- reflecting the scientific and technological developments to the education by cooperating with the sector
- assessing the quality of work
- assessing the usability of resulting product
- qualifications of training personnel

Technical training has compulsorily gained a flexible structure as a result of rapidly increasing technological infrastructure, developments in markets and working conditions. During technical training, in order to increase the quality of training, programs should obviate some of the requirements such as physical infrastructure, laboratory needs and workshop equipment and also develop the qualities of instructors.

4. Conclusion

For the effectiveness of applied technical training, which depends on the considerable accordance between vocational schools and sector, the convenience of mutual demands is very significant for training. The graduates of furniture and decoration programs at vocational schools are considered strategic manpower for the sector. Therefore, it is very essential to train strategic manpower for the 21st century’s competing market in the fields of furniture and decoration programs being applied for sectoral technology and knowledge.

All countries have to invest the human resources working in good, service and information sectors and keeping alive these sectors. The educational institution which will sustain this kind of human resource is the technical training (Yörük, Dikici, and Uysal, 2002).

According to recent studies, one of the greatest problems of the companies in furniture sector is employment of skilled manpower. Besides, it is determined that the relationship furniture sector and furniture decoration programs in vocational schools is poor and vocational schools and related people have not produced appropriate project concerning the sectoral problems (Ulay, 2006).

It is suggested that strategic manpower, used in the production process, should be systematically trained by applied training and should have complicated technical information and skills for the investors planning to invest in the field of furniture concerning the appeal of investigation. That can be seen as follows:

- Strengthening relations between industry and vocational guidance in furniture and decoration training
- Increasing the variety and the rate of skilled manpower in furniture and decoration programs
- Designing and up skilling foreign language, setting model, defining formal and informal learning
- Defining the market conditions and working conditions and up skilling for projects and problem solving.

The person is able to acquire and comprehend the job while working on the production process and also coordinate the other components better. In order to provide such training, workshops in vocational schools should be presented to the students with equipped with technological infrastructure and production systems. However, it is not impossible for vocational schools to have the necessary high technology equipments and machinery used by the sector because of their non-dynamic structure. Therefore, students sometimes do not have enough experience in working principles, using techniques and features and also maintenance and repair of these machinery and equipment.
Training skilled manpower fulfilling the expectations of furniture sector is only possible with the on-site technical training provided by the coordination between industrial institutions and vocational schools. Effectiveness of applied training in workshops in furniture and decoration programs for the students and provision of a basis for workplace in terms of strategic manpower are provided by gaining the principles in the workplace below:

1. focusing the production and production process (production attention)
2. reading production-based projects and programs work stream (project transfer)
3. transferring the project to production (production stream)
4. recognizing machine and identifying the machine capacity
5. identifying the product standards and obtaining quality assessment information (identification standards)
6. gaining assembly practice of production (assembly)
7. gaining package knowledge for marketing the product (packaging)
8. carrying out machine maintenance and cleanliness and order of the workshop (workshop order)

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