



A PROPOSAL FOR REVISITING FOOTWEAR TRADITION FOR INNOVATION

Mehmet Şahin

Higher School of Vocational and Technical Sciences, Selcuk University, Turkey

Corresponding author: Mehmet Şahin, E-mail: mesahin@selcuk.edu.tr

Abstract: Footwear has evolved from ancient times and through the centuries from protective sandals to a protective and aesthetic part of clothing. Today, there are many varieties of styles and materials used in the shoe industry. It is also noteworthy that some old fashions repeat themselves with only minor changes. It is a fact that some of the world's most famous and popular companies have achieved that fame from cloth and footwear fashion and design. Tradition and culture have a huge impact on footwear design and on the motives and modes of how people buy and wear footwear. Therefore, tradition and culture of specific nation or region can create very important role at creating brand identities of European footwear companies. The aim of this paper is to present a Development of Innovation project proposal regarding revisiting traditional footwear so as to adapt it to up-to-date footwear training curriculum and production. The proposal aims to rediscover the peculiarities of traditional footwear and originality of cultural heritage of specific regions in order to transfer their design and models into VET curriculum so as to revive the traditions to create innovative products.

Key words: Footwear, Tradition, Innovation, Curriculum

1. INTRODUCTION

According to the report by European Commission: Trade: textile and Footwear, EU textile exports in 2009 is €30.4billion, EU textile imports in 2009: €74.9billion and EU share of global textile exports in 2009: around 3.6%. Biggest markets for EU textile exports in 2009 are Switzerland, Russia, USA, Turkey and Tunisia. The focus of the European Commission's work in the textile and clothing sector is embedded in the framework of the renewed Market Access Strategy and aims to remove barriers to European textile exports in growing markets abroad, and fighting counterfeiting, which is highly damaging for EU textile and clothing producers. As for the data about Footwear sector, according to the same report, EU footwear exports in 2009: €4.7 billion, EU footwear imports in 2009: €12.4 billion and EU share of global footwear exports in 2009: 0.5%. Biggest markets for EU footwear exports are USA, Russia, Switzerland and Japan. The EU is a major producer and exporter of footwear, especially high quality, high value fashion shoes. In 2009, the EU was the second global exporter of footwear exporting €4.7 billion worth of shoes globally. The report also remarks that, as with textiles and clothing, EU footwear exporters continue to face obstacles to exports in many markets, both in the form of high tariffs and non-tariff barriers. The footwear sector also suffers from the impact of counterfeiting and piracy. On the European market, EU producers face strong competition from low priced imports. Anti-dumping measures put in place since 2006 have been extended in December 2009 in order to counter unfair competition from China and Vietnam. According to the report, an additional challenge for EU footwear producers is ensuring a steady and open supply of raw materials. The leather goods sector is widely affected by export taxes and export restrictions. Because the price of raw materials can be between 30 and 50% of the cost of production in this sector, barriers that raise the costs of raw materials can pose a serious problem. The EU addresses these problems through both its bilateral trade negotiations with raw material-exporting countries and its Market access partnership. The Footwear sector in Europe is one of the most populated traditional sectors, constituted majority by SMEs, and a workforce of all low-qualified, 85% of who develop operative activities. This sector of activity is one that absorbs the most, the new

technologies and processes and it's very much engaged with the modernization at a technical, technological and personnel level.

On the other hand, the clothing and footwear industry can be considered to be one of the oldest sector in the human history and developments in this industry have always been based on styles and fashions. Footwear has evolved from ancient times and through the centuries from protective sandals to a protective and aesthetic part of clothing. Today, there are many varieties of styles and materials used in the shoe industry. It is also noteworthy that some old fashions repeat themselves with only minor changes. One of the reasons for this is that most of them normally depend on the cultural practices of a particular group of people in the society. Thus, most people identify themselves with cloth and footwear fashions easily. In addition, the clothing and footwear industry especially in the modern world is directly related with employment and income generation. It is a fact that some of the world's most famous and popular companies have achieved that fame from cloth and footwear fashion and design. On the other hand, tradition is regarded as a power that bonds people together and creates societies and organizations. It also helps to create new products for the future through organisations that stress and make use of the past to create new products. For such organisations, innovation is the process of creating new methods or things that would help attain the goals faster or with less effort. Thus, it is important that innovation can be achieved by the maintenance of tradition in mind and transforming it to novel products. So, we can work at creating new methods of ensuring that what needs to be done gets done. There should be no battle between the old and the new in any organization. According to Mark Cooray (1995) tradition is important in any culture or civilisation. Continuity in an era of change is something which people need and desire. Tradition and culture have a huge impact on footwear design and on the motives and modes of how people buy and wear footwear. Therefore tradition and culture of specific nation or region can create very important role at creating brand identities of European footwear companies. In the era of confusion and fast pace of life a lot of tradition and culture is hidden and forgotten, which reflects also in the "emptiness" and boredom of footwear design that often carries no message. Subconsciously people are aspired to the fundamentals of the region that they belong to and if companies would be able to integrate that traditional and cultural heritage and originality of specific region to the design of the footwear, this would increase their chances to succeed on particular market with meaningful design innovations.

2. CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT IN VET

It is argued by Boud (2003:46) that the term *curriculum* is not widely used by universities. Boud believes that the term *course development* provides a much stronger emphasis for the content of the curriculum and all the various aspects that create the educational environment. He presents the case for creating work as the curriculum: "... here needs to be a focus on an educational approach to the curriculum, not a narrow operational competency-based approach suitable for predefined learning outcomes. Competency-based frameworks that delineate the universe of outcomes – such as those used in vocational education and training derived from industry-based occupational standards – are unlikely to be appropriate except for relatively low-level work-based programmes". Boud is clearly making a distinction between university and vocational curriculum. This leads us to examine the curriculum in the context of the Vocational Education and Training (VET) system. Encyclopaedia Britannica (2006:202) sets out the history of curriculum development and claims that it has undergone vast changes in the last century: "... curriculum has responded to social issues by including such subjects as consumer education (or other applications of the economics of a free enterprise society), ethnic or multicultural education, environmental education, sex and family-life education, and substance-abuse education. Recent interest in vocational-technical education has been directed toward establishing specialized vocational schools, improving career information resources, integrating school and work experience, utilizing community resources, and meeting the needs of the labour market. ... Computers have become increasingly important in education not only as a field of study but also as reference and teaching aids".

Curriculum Development has long been regarded as a core-component of Technical and Vocational Education and Training. In the history of Technical and Vocational Education, a systematic approach to curriculum development is relatively recent. Due to lack of resources, experience and traditions, there have been certain tendencies in some developing countries simply to copy existing Curriculum materials from industrialised nations without proper adaptation to the local

situation and needs, which has often proved to be inappropriate and expensive. According to the Final Report by UNEVOC (1993) Curriculum developed for vocational training should not only meet the goals and objectives of training but also be implemented effectively. There have been a variety of models that have been tried in the past and hence curriculum development has either been in the subjective or objective mode. But recently the trainers and educationalists have developed competency based curriculum which can be implemented using multi-media educational resources that have now become available. Such an approach allows open entry/open exit philosophy of Curriculum implementation to be adopted to allow the trainees to learn at one's own pace in the most flexible way. According to Helen Bowers (2006), the future of competency-based training may well contain surprises and the results of strategic planning can only be faintly seen through future misty proposals. Knowledge of the learning approaches by students, the benefits of communities of practice in the classroom and the quality of competency-based curriculum in Vocational Education and Training is the epistemological key to applied learning. This has to be combined with an ontological focus to ensure that curriculum encourages teaching, knowing and learning and becomes part of who we are rather than just something a teacher must follow.

The most recent approach towards curriculum development is the modular approach. In this approach, the subject matter has been divided into modules and the modules are studied through workstations. The Learning process is student-centred rather than teacher-centred. The modules are sub-divided into learning elements and these elements are learnt by carrying out tasks, which help to acquire employable skills. This approach of curriculum development, obviously, assumes the availability of resources for its implementation.

3. AIM OF THE PAPER

The aim of this paper is to present a Development of Innovation project proposal regarding revisiting traditional footwear so as to adapt it to up-to-date footwear training curriculum and production. The proposal aims to rediscover the peculiarities of traditional footwear and originality of cultural heritage of specific regions in order to transfer their design and models into VET curriculum so as to revive the traditions to create innovative products. The project will produce printed and electronic materials describing the design and models of the traditional footwear in the partner countries while at the same time presenting also specifics of national culture that could be transferred into footwear design ideas. In addition, these materials will be the base of the innovative curriculum to be used in the VET related with footwear. The printed materials and curriculum that will be developed will be in English, Turkish, Romanian and Slovenian. Thus, the curriculum and material will create a new methodology, which is modular curriculum.

4. THE CONSORTIUM

The consortium can carry out the tasks in the project as each partner has experience and already worked on previous projects. The project consortium has been set up based on the partners' national and European acknowledgment in training and research. The partnership consists of three partners representing Turkey (Selcuk University), Romania (University of Oradea) and Slovenia (Industrial Development and Testing Center for Leather and Footwear). The partners will develop and improve the common training module to be used firstly in their respective countries as a product of Balkan cooperation. The project consortium has been set up based on the partners' national and European acknowledgment in training and research. The partnership also comprises of members with strong support from the Governing bodies of each country. This will produce a strong partnership with knowledge and information on the requirements for training and the industry. Thus, through the support of the Governing bodies, the partnership will achieve the successful implementation of the Project. Since all the partners are training and research organizations that have been engaged in training and research for years, they have the potential and capacity to get feedback either from the present trainees or from the organizations outside that serve the same training.

5. EUROPEAN BENEFIT

In a remarkably short time, economic globalization has changed the world's economic order, bringing with it new challenges and opportunities. European footwear companies cannot compete in this new environment unless it becomes more innovative and responds more effectively to consumers' needs and preferences. The European Union possesses extraordinary potential for innovation. Europe has a longstanding tradition of producing breakthrough inventions; it has a wealth of creative people and can build on its cultural diversity. It has laid the foundations for one of the largest single markets in the world, where innovative products and services may be commercialised on a large scale. In addition, the European Commission is formulating, influencing and, where appropriate, implementing policies and programmes to increase Europe's innovativeness. The Commission is trying to make sure innovation is thoroughly understood and approached comprehensively, thereby contributing to greater competitiveness, sustainability and job creation (EU: Enterprise and Industry).

In this context, the footwear sector and SMEs are economically and culturally important as they retain local, regional and national traditions while employing local primary materials and local labour, and making a large impact on the European economy. Despite the importance of traditional practices and cultural heritage for footwear design no thorough study has been made up to now on this area, let alone transforming this kind of study into innovative curriculum. The target group of the project are trainees, students, trainer, lecturer, and consultants and footwear sector. The content is also relevant for people who re-entry in the training in the field of footwear industry. This project will respond to these issues through developing innovative materials and curriculum that will help VET learners, apprentices and people working in the footwear sector in SMEs in terms of innovative product design and training. The target groups of the project are trainees, students, trainer, lecturer, and consultants and footwear sector. The content is also relevant for people who re-entry in the training in the field of footwear industry.

The project focuses on developing new design ideas and themes and renewal of crafts, which can be capitalized on a multicultural plan. Traditions, experiences and, above all, traditional cultural heritage in traditional footwear domain will be capitalized in order to develop, in an innovative way, yet traditional at the same time, fashion and design. The project will function as a meeting point between time, space and people, cultures and events, a mean of diversity and cultural contacts in the context of continuous formation. By sharing knowledge and expertise, the partners will work to emphasize their labour similarities and differences in the adult education area, developing new skills; they will also share best practices in order to improve public awareness on traditional footwear.

6. OBJECTIVES

The project aims to contribute to the development of quality lifelong learning and to promote high performance, innovation and a European dimension in systems and practices in the field. The project will improve vocational and educational training curricula on footwear in Turkey, Romania and Slovenia by focusing on the development of innovation and good practice. The results will be transposed into a printed and electronic form, making it available on European level. By accessing the training curriculum, trainers and teachers, adult learners, as well as trainees and apprentice will be keeping up to date with skills and knowledge necessary for innovative training. The project aims also to help promote creativity, competitiveness, employability and the growth of an entrepreneurial spirit. In a world increasingly based on knowledge and information, education and training are put at the core. The industry needs to make learning a lifelong endeavour to deal with their employees of all ages continuously developing their skills. By creating a new content and material, the project will help both workers and footwear industry to transform the way they learn, interact and work in order to meet the needs for competitiveness, employability and entrepreneurial spirit.

Another objective is to support improvements in quality and innovation in vocational education and training systems, institutions and practices. This objective can be achieved by improving the qualifications and competencies of the trainees in footwear field and it is directly related to the well-designed and programmed curriculum to be carried out on footwear training. Considering that education is a dynamic process, it will be possible through this project, through its dynamic and continuous characteristics, to improve the quality of vocational education and accession to vocational training will be carried out. The project also aims to enhance the attractiveness of vocational education and training and mobility for employers and individuals and to facilitate the mobility of working trainees. The project, with the new material and curriculum, will help innovation

and attraction in training. The common training and methodology envisaged in the project will increase the cooperation between the partner countries. This will help mobility of employment in the partner countries and in EU. As this project provides new training tools, it will create new job opportunities for the individuals in partner countries and thus this will contribute to employment exchange in EU.

In addition, the project wants to facilitate the development of innovative practices in the field of vocational education and training other than at tertiary level, and their transfer, including from one participating country to others. The curriculum will be based on modular approach and will help the vocational training in partner countries to have a common curriculum and training method. This innovative practice in vocational education and training may help the unification and circulation of workforce if the common curriculum becomes a unique, accepted footwear curriculum among the vocational organizations in EU. The materials offered will help unemployed workers to get better jobs by upgrading their skills.

7. CONCLUSION

The proposal aims to rediscover the peculiarities of traditional footwear and originality of cultural heritage of specific regions in order to transfer their design and models into VET curriculum so as to revive the traditions to create innovative products. The project will contribute to enrich the vocational training tool needs mentioned in the objectives of LDV program. It is also expected that will respond to such aims as it is to strengthen the role of education and training within the Lisbon process at both European and national level not only to promote competitiveness but also sustainable economic growth and social cohesion and to support implementation of the Education and Training 2010 work programme. Thus, once the target sectors and educational institutions have the training materials and curriculum, they will be in a position where they will need recruiting their workers. This will broaden their activity in a more effective manner. As potential users, the training organizations, the SMEs, and the universities, colleges, vocational schools, training centres will have an opportunity to modify and add to their way of footwear training. Vocational training systems and practices will be enriched and updated according to proposed curriculum in the footwear sector. In the short term, trainers will have a tested curriculum and training materials for immediate use; trainees and apprentices will have an easy access to the web site where they will have access to the materials in English, Turkish, Romanian and Slovenian; technicians will be able to update and add to their knowledge and find a source for immediate solutions to the problems faced in their workplace. In the long-term, the SMEs and Universities, colleges, vocational schools will utilise the training tool by having new training materials and curriculum based on the new models and designs derived out of traditional footwear.

In terms of vocational training systems and practices, it is expected to eliminate the discrepancy between the levels of training provided by various training centres. Even after the official project end, the partnership will maintain for dissemination and valorisation activities to broaden it to other EU countries. This may help the unification and circulation of workforce if.

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Contact and Editors' Address:

Liliana INDRIE,

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FACULTATEA DE TEXTILE SI PIELARIE,**

Str. B.St.Delavrancea nr. 4,

Oradea, 410058, Romania,

Tel.: 00-40-259-408448

E-mail : lindrie@uoradea.ro

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