

**THE RELEVANCE OF IMPROVING VOCATIONAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS
BASED ON INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCE**

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Abstract:

This article analyzes the structure and content of educational programs in Uzbekistan's vocational education system and the necessity for their improvement. In particular, it proposes the formation of the main components of vocational education programs—qualification requirements, model curricula, and model syllabi—as a unified and integrated document. Furthermore, the current situation is analyzed, and special attention is paid to the necessity to reform the content and essence of vocational education programs based on the demands of the time, ways to improve based on new approaches relying on foreign experiences, as well as its prospective outcomes.

Keywords: Vocational education, vocational education system, professional standard, qualification requirement, model curriculum, model syllabus (syllabi), vocational education program, international experience, labor market, employer.

Introduction

In recent years, large-scale reforms aimed at improving the vocational education system have been implemented in Uzbekistan. In particular, the Decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan “On measures for the further improvement of the system for training qualified personnel and the implementation of international educational programs in vocational education” (No. PF-158 of October 16. 2024.) initiated a new stage of reforms in this area. Furthermore, the Resolution of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan “On measures to further improve the National Qualifications System of the Republic of Uzbekistan” (No. PQ-345 of September 30. 2024.) mentioned the urgency of improving educational programs based on professional standards.

From this point of view, revising the vocational education programs used in vocational educational organizations, harmonizing and updating them based on international standards has become an urgent issue today.

The main part

1. Structure and elements of the vocational education program

In current practice, vocational education programs consist of educational and regulatory documents in the form of a separate document, such as "qualification requirements, model curriculum and model syllabi". In other words, the vocational education program for a single profession or specialty is fragmented.

That is, the qualification requirements, curriculum, and training program for a specific profession or specialty are being developed separately.

The qualification requirement - requirements for the level of general knowledge and professional training of a graduate of the relevant stage of continuing education.

The curriculum - a document that defines the types of educational activities, academic subjects (modules) and courses, and the composition of qualification practices, the sequence of their study, the seasonality of types of work in industries and sectors and the volume in hours in a specific profession or specialty of vocational education.

The syllabi (syllabus) - a document that specifies the content of subjects and practices included in the vocational education curriculum, acceptable teaching methods, and information sources. Currently, these educational programs, namely qualification requirements, model curricula, and model syllabi, are being developed based on professional standards. This is certainly the most correct and appropriate approach to developing and improving vocational education programs today.

The minimum norms (standards) that express the main labor functions and the conditions for their performance, which determine the content, quality, and requirements of work at the basic skill level for a particular profession or specialty, are reflected in professional standards.

For instance, based on professional standards for the current academic year (2024/2025), curricula, qualification requirements, and subject (module) syllabi have been developed for:

- 163 professions at Level 3
- 84 professions at Level 4
- 116 professions at Level 5

Definitely, until now, educational regulatory documents prepared on the basis of professional standards have been aimed at aligning the professional skills and qualifications acquired by graduates with the requirements of employing organizations, as well as helping them master the necessary knowledge.

2. Current problems and necessary reforms

Practical analysis shows that the development of qualification requirements, model curricula and model syllabi as separate documents leads to an increase in document turnover in the educational process, structural fragmentation of documents and problems in ensuring consistency and integration between them. Additionally, the separate development and approval process of these documents leads to inefficient use of time and resources, and causes difficulties for employers due to the document not being presented as a unified whole. Therefore, the formation of vocational education programs as a single document is seen as an important task.

Currently, secondary specialized vocational education programs are already being developed as single, unified documents, which is positively received by both educators and employers. As mentioned above, the improvement of vocational education programs in this manner frees both teachers and staffs of employer organizations from unnecessary hassle. However, there is still a need to review, and if necessary, fundamentally improve secondary specialized vocational education programs. In particular, these vocational education programs should be developed

based on new generation professional standards. This will align the content of education more closely with the demands of the labor market. Especially, the implementation of new generation professional standards will make it possible to regulate labor relations based on modern requirements, revise higher and vocational education programs, and elevate the system of workforce training to a qualitatively new level.

So, what should modern vocational education programs look like?

1. Aligned with labor market demands

- Programs should be based on the needs of the real labor market.
- They must comply with current professional standards and job descriptions.
- Programs should be regularly updated, taking into account technological advancements and the emergence of new professions.

2. Modular and differential structure

- Should allow for step-by-step learning through educational modules.
- Learners should be able to choose specific modules based on their abilities and interests, and acquire qualifications gradually.

3. Developed as a unified document

- The program should be a single, comprehensive document that includes qualification requirements, curriculum, and subject (module) syllabi.
- Each component should be coherent with the others and aligned toward a common goal (outcome).

4. Focused on practical skills

- In addition to theoretical knowledge, it should cover the practical skills required in real work processes.
- Ideally, at least 60% of the education should consist of practical training sessions.

5. Inclusive and adaptable

- The program should be accessible and convenient for individuals of different ages, persons with disabilities, and those in need of retraining;
- It should also include short-term, retraining, and advanced training areas.

6. International compatibility and recognition

- Programs should align with UNESCO and other international standards.
- They should be recognized in the international labor market and include appropriate certification mechanisms.

3. International experience and approaches needed for Uzbekistan

In the field of vocational education, the practice of developing educational programs for professions and specialties as a single unified document has been effectively implemented in some countries. This approach is mainly aimed at ensuring alignment between education and the labor market, and achieving transparency and sustainability.

Below are examples from several countries:

For example, an analysis of the experiences of Germany, France, Kazakhstan, Finland, Russia, and the United States shows that in these countries, educational programs for professions and specialties are developed as a single, integrated document, and this approach has proven to be effective.

In more detail, in Kazakhstan, workforce trained on the basis of educational programs developed on the basis of professional standards are in high demand in the local labor market. It is noted that in 2024, 79% of graduates of vocational education institutions were employed. These results are assessed as the effect of the dual education system and programs implemented and improved in cooperation with employers.

Additionally, at the beginning of the 2023–2024 academic year, 711 independent technical and vocational education institutions were operating in Kazakhstan, with a total of 548,000 students enrolled. Among the graduates, 60.8% secured employment, while 15.8% continued their studies in higher education institutions.

Demand for graduates of Kazakhstan's vocational education system is also increasing in the international labor market. This is seen as a result of the alignment of educational programs with international standards and the ongoing reforms implemented in collaboration with employers.

Along with this, it has been noted that in certain fields (especially **arts, law, and medicine**) the rate of employment among graduates is relatively lower. This indicates a need to **further strengthen coordination between the education system and the labor market**.

In conclusion, graduates of vocational education in Kazakhstan are in high demand in the local and international labor markets, which is ensured by improving the quality of education and strengthening cooperation with employers. The basis for achieving such results in the field of vocational education is undoubtedly the simplification and development of vocational education programs in a way that is convenient and understandable for everyone.

In this regard, it is also advisable to integrate vocational education programs in Uzbekistan based on modern requirements, that is, to redevelop them in the form of a single document. This approach would not only improve the content of education, but also offer the following key advantages in organizing and implementing the educational process:

1. **Reduces of bureaucracy:** By combining the qualification description, curriculum, and modules into a single document, the overall volume of documentation is significantly reduced.
2. **Reduces teachers' workload:** Instead of dealing with redundant or disconnected documents, a unified and coherent structure simplifies the work of educators.
3. **Creates clarity for employers:** If the components of the vocational education programs are clearly and concisely structured, employers will be more interested in improving educational programs and it will be easier to assess personnel potential;

4. **Mutual compatibility is ensured:** The alignment of qualification requirements, curricula, and syllabi — along with structural and content coherence — improves the quality of learning outcomes.

Furthermore, if vocational education programs are developed in alignment with international standards — including the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) and UNESCO TVET requirements — their recognition and export potential can be ensured. This, in turn, will enhance the global competitiveness of our national vocational education system.

Conclusion

Developing educational programs in the vocational education system in the form of a unified document is of great importance in improving the quality of workforce training in the country, shaping them as competitive and labor market-relevant specialists. This approach forms a system based on uniform standards in the educational process, focused on clear goals and results.

Moreover, unified educational programs can be an important tool for systematizing the educational process in vocational educational institutions, harmonizing curricula and subject programs, standardizing teacher activities, and clearly defining assessment criteria. This approach will serve to increase the quality, efficiency, and transparency of education.

In conclusion, developing educational programs in the form of a single document and updating them in accordance with international requirements plays a strategic role in modernizing the vocational education system in Uzbekistan, increasing its efficiency and creating a modern workforce resource that serves the socio-economic development of the country.

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