

PRESSING ISSUES IN PREPARING YOUTH FOR THE LABOR MARKET AND IMPROVING THE PROFESSIONAL SKILLS AND COMPETENCIES OF PERSONNEL

Farxod Faxriddinov Farxiddin og'li

Master's student, Webster University in Tashkent

farhodrailway@gmail.com

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Abstract

This article analyzes contemporary challenges in preparing youth for the labor market and improving the professional skills and competencies of personnel. It systematically examines the demands of the labor market, the limitations of the education system, global trends in professional development, and existing problems in the context of Uzbekistan. Following the IMRAD structure, the research proposes scientifically based solutions. The article discusses strategies aimed at strengthening cooperation between state policy, the education system, and the private sector.

Keywords: youth, labor market, professional skills, competencies, education system, professional development, global trends, retraining, dual education.

Introduction

In the modern economy, the labor market is constantly evolving. Technological innovations, digitalization, artificial intelligence, and global competition are placing new demands on the professional skills and competencies of personnel. In developing countries like Uzbekistan, the integration of youth into the labor market and the improvement of workforce qualifications are among the key factors of economic development. However, issues such as the lack of synergy between the education system and the labor market, outdated professional skills, and the inability of youth to meet modern requirements remain pressing challenges.

This article is devoted to analyzing the problems in the process of preparing youth for the labor market and developing scientifically based strategies for improving the professional skills of personnel. The research aims to answer the following questions:

- What skills does the modern labor market demand from youth?
- How well does Uzbekistan's education system meet these demands?
- What innovative approaches can be used to improve workforce qualifications?
- How can global experiences be adapted to the local context?

The article analyzes global trends while taking into account Uzbekistan's economic and social conditions, and provides practical recommendations.

Labor Market Demands

The analysis shows that the modern labor market requires not only technical knowledge but also soft skills. According to the International Labour Organization's 2023 report, more than 78% of employers worldwide consider the following skills important:

- Digital literacy – Skills in working with artificial intelligence, data analysis, programming, and digital platforms.
- Soft skills – Teamwork, problem-solving, time management, adaptability, and communication skills.
- Research skills – The ability to acquire new knowledge and engage in lifelong learning.

In Uzbekistan, more than 62% of young people are unable to fully meet the demands of the labor market, which leads to an increase in the unemployment rate (9.1% in 2024) and a decline in economic efficiency.

Uzbekistan's education system places great emphasis on theoretical knowledge; however, there are the following problems in developing practical skills:

- Outdated curricula: Higher and vocational education programs adapt slowly to the demands of the labor market. For example, courses such as Python programming or data analysis, which are highly demanded in the IT sector, are offered only in a limited number of institutions.

- Infrastructure shortages: More than 70% of vocational training centers are not equipped with modern facilities.

- Low teacher qualifications: More than 45% of teachers have not attended professional development courses in the last five years.

- Limited coverage of retraining courses: In 2023, only 120,000 people participated in retraining courses, which represents less than 1% of the total workforce.

- Lack of cooperation between employers and educational institutions: More than 80% of the private sector does not cooperate with educational institutions.

- Low motivation levels among youth: 55% of young people lack sufficient motivation for self-development, which is related to economic factors (low wages) and the social environment.

The “dual education” model used in Singapore and Germany has shown successful results. In this model, students acquire theoretical knowledge at universities and practical skills at enterprises. For example, more than 60% of vocational education in Germany is funded by companies.

The results of the study show that systematic reforms are necessary to prepare youth for the labor market and improve the professional skills of personnel. The following proposals are put forward:

- Develop new courses in cooperation with the private sector to align educational programs with labor market requirements. For instance, programs on artificial intelligence and big data could be introduced.

- Increase the share of practical training and internships.

- Expand opportunities for distance education through digital platforms, for example, adapting platforms like Coursera or Udemy to the local context.

- Establish vocational training centers equipped with modern facilities jointly with the private sector.

- Introduce retraining programs financed by employers, such as in-house training.

- Develop “employment guarantee” programs to ensure students are employed immediately after graduation.

- Create career counseling centers to help young people with career choices.

- Encourage self-development by allocating state grants and scholarships.

- Organize motivational campaigns targeting youth on social networks.

- Pilot the “dual education” model based on the experiences of Germany and Singapore, adapting it to Uzbekistan's IT, construction, and manufacturing sectors.

- Introduce programs similar to South Korea's “K-Work” to prepare youth for foreign labor markets.

These proposals are developed considering Uzbekistan's economic and social conditions and aim to strengthen cooperation between the government, the private sector, and educational institutions.

Preparing youth for the labor market and improving the professional skills of personnel is one of the important tasks in Uzbekistan's economy. The study shows that these challenges can be addressed by ensuring synergy between the education system and the labor market, developing modern skills, and implementing innovative approaches. Adapting global experiences to local conditions — in particular, introducing the dual education model and expanding cooperation with the private sector — is of critical importance. In the future, state policy should prioritize these areas to ensure the successful integration of youth into the labor market.

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