

## Narrowing the Gap between Vocational Education and the Labor Market

### CONTENTS:

#### Introduction

#### 1. Current System of Vocational Education: Problems and Challenges

- 1.1. Institutional Gaps
- 1.2. Problems of Educational Process

#### 2. Improvement of Institutional Layout of Vocational Education

- 2.1. Demand Driven Planning
- 2.2. Linking Colleges to Employers
- 2.3. Ensuring Continuity in Education
- 2.4. Independent Quality Control of Education
- 2.5. Better Flexibility of Teaching Forms and Methods

#### Conclusion

*This Policy Brief addresses the issue of quality in secondary specialized and vocational education (SSVE) and proposes reforms that would ensure that compulsory vocational education has a greater impact.*

Source: Data of the Center of Secondary Specialized and Vocational Education under MHSSE

The current model of managing and regulating the sector may lead to a serious imbalance in the labor market. For instance, 92.1% of 2007-2008 academic year graduates from vocational colleges are employed. However, only 46% of these graduates are employed according to their specialization.

Uzbekistan has endorsed an ambitious modernization program for key economic sectors which entails investment at the level of around 20% of GDP annually until 2012. This will spur further structural transformation and increase demand for a more skilled and diversified labor force. The Government is continuing to invest in SSVE infrastructure in order that vocational education institutions would be a major supplier of skilled labor for a developing economy which has grown at between 7-10% per annum since 2003.

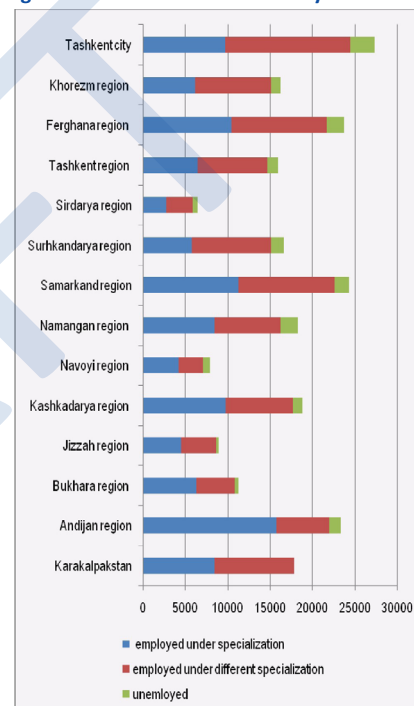
At the same time, the SSVE system remains more supply than demand driven and so far has not aligned with the needs of the economy. The existing institutional arrangements for SSVE prevent the kinds of closer linkages between vocational education and industrial policy which would help reduce skills gaps and provide broader employment opportunities for young people. The Center of Secondary Specialized and Vocational Education under the Ministry of Higher and Secondary Specialized Education (MHSSE) is responsible for planning the number of students and identifying their specialization, setting the standards and ensuring the quality of education, organizing the educational process, as well as channeling financial and other resources. Other government agencies, including those directly responsible for the design and implementation of industrial policy, play only a marginal role in managing SSVE.

The Government of Uzbekistan should strive to develop more labor market oriented approaches for SSVE to ensure that both public and household resources spent on vocational education achieve the maximum benefit possible.

- The Ministry of Labor and Social Protection (MLSP), which is responsible for expanding employment opportunities, has to act as the "general client" of SSVE institutions. In cooperation with the Ministry of Economy, other government agencies, local authorities, business associations and large companies, MLSP has to develop appropriate mechanisms for monitoring the impact of SSVE and conduct continuous labor market needs assessments to ensure that the SSVE is responsive to labor demand in the long run. A related priority is to gradually transfer SSVE institutions, depending on their sectoral affiliation, under the administration of business associations and large companies to enable closer linkages between vocational education and the needs of specific economic sectors.

- Functions currently performed exclusively by the SSVE Center have to be distributed among independent agencies. In particular, the SSVE Center should focus on the development of training standards and curricula, organization of trainings for teachers and instructors, and the

**Employment of graduates of vocational colleges in the 2007-2008 academic year**



Source: Data of the Center of Secondary Specialized and Vocational Education under MHSSE

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provision of methodological support. A new agency under the Cabinet of Ministers should be established to monitor the implementation of national educational standards, provide external quality assurance in SSVE and deal with the accreditation and certification of vocational education institutions.

- The Ministry of Higher and Secondary Specialized Education and the Ministry of Public Education should be merged into a single Ministry of Education to ensure a comprehensive approach to the development of the national education system.

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