

Support to strengthening the higher education system in Azerbaijan



Twinning project AZ/14/ENI/OT/01/17 (AZ/49)

Mission Report

Short-Term Mission on Activity 1.3. Assess and review the current system for using labour market data and skills forecasting within the Ministry of Education and other related bodies

(July 9 – 13, 2018)

1. Name and Function of the Expert:

Full name of expert

Ms. Saulė Mačiukaitė-Žvinienė, Lithuania

Signature

Full name of expert

Ms. Jolanta Silka, Latvia

Signature

2. Objective and Tasks of the Mission:

The mission is carried out within the framework of:

COMPONENT 1: SELECTED NATIONAL EDUCATION STANDARDS ARE ALIGNED TO INCLUDE A COMPETENCE-BASED FOCUS

Activity 1.3. Assess and review the current system for using labour market data and skills forecasting within the Ministry of Education and other related bodies

Benchmarks for this activity are:

- Report on current situation for using labour market intelligence and skills forecasting within the Ministry of Education and other relevant ministries/ institutions in BC

3. Time schedule of mission:

Date and Time	Activity
Monday 9 July 2018	<p>09:30-12:30 The STEs meet with the Twinning team to discuss the agenda of the mission</p> <p>13:00 – 14:00 LUNCH</p> <p>14:00-15:30 Meeting with the staff of the Science, Higher and Secondary Professional Education Department, MoE</p> <p>Stakeholders: <i>Mr. Yaqub Piriyeu, Head of Science, Higher and Secondary Professional Education Department, MoE; Mr. Shahin Bayramov, BC Project Leader, Deputy Head of Science, Higher and Secondary Professional Education Department, MoE; Mr. Yashar Omarov, RTA Counterpart, Senior Advisor at Science, Higher and Secondary Professional Education Department, MoE</i></p> <p>15:30-17:00 The STEs review documents relevant for the mission</p>
Tuesday 10 July 2018	<p>10:00 – 12:30 Attending a workshop organized by the EU-funded Technical Assistance Project on Implementation of Azerbaijan National Qualifications Framework</p> <p>13:00 – 14:00 LUNCH</p> <p>14:15 – 16:30 A workshop in the MoE to discuss a feasible model regarding the usage of labour market intelligence in Azerbaijan</p> <p>Stakeholders: <i>Mr. Shahin Bayramov, BC PL; Mr. Yashar Omarov, RTA counterpart; Mr. Kamran Rasulov, Senior Advisor, MoE; Mr. Latif Abdullayev, Head of Unit for Economics of Education, MoE ; Mr. Elvin Nasibov, Head of Statistics Unit, MoE; Mr. Tofiq Ahmadov, Head of Accreditation Department, ANO; Ms. Lala Abbasova, Senior Specialist, ANO</i></p>
Wednesday 11 July 2018	<p>10:00 – 12:00 Baku Engineering University</p>

	<p>Stakeholders: <i>Mr. Hamzaga Orujov</i>, Vice Rector for Educational Affairs; <i>Ms. Gulchohra Ibrahimova</i>, Director, Department for Contacts with Businesses and Career Development</p> <p>13:00 – 14:00 LUNCH</p> <p>15:00 – 17:00 Azerbaijan Technical University Stakeholders: <i>Mr. Khalig Yahudov</i>, Interim Rector; <i>Mr. Ilham Pirmammadov</i>, Vice Rector for Science and Technology; <i>Mr. Isa Khalilov</i>, Vice Rector for Educational Affairs; <i>Mr. Zakay Shaev</i>, Head of Teaching Unit.</p>
Thursday 12 July 2018	<p>10:00-11:30 Attending 1st Steering Committee Meeting of the Twinning Project</p> <p>12:00-12:45 Meeting with <i>Mr. Jeyhun Bayramov</i>, Minister for Education of Azerbaijan together with the staff of the Science, Higher and Secondary Professional Education Department and Project Leaders (France, Lithuania and Latvia) of the Twinning Project.</p> <p>13:00-15:00 Attending a lunch hosted by the French Embassy in Baku together with the AZ MoE representatives, Project Leaders (France, Lithuania, Latvia) of the Twinning project and Twinning team.</p> <p>16:00-17:00 Meeting in Deloitte, branch office of UK-based consulting and audit company in Baku Stakeholders <i>Ms. Vusala Karimova</i>, Partner for Human Resources</p> <p>17:45-18:45 Meeting in the office of the Azerbaijan Student Youth Organizations’ Union (ASYOU) Stakeholders <i>Ms. Farida Ibrahimova</i>, Head of Projects Department; <i>Mr. Nurkhan Babayev</i>, Executive Director for Internal Affairs; <i>Mr. Faiq Mammadov</i>, Executive Director for International Relations.</p>
Friday 13 July 2018	<p>10:00-12:30</p>

A workshop to introduce an already developed feasible model regarding the use of labour market intelligence in Azerbaijan

Stakeholders

Mr. Shahin Bayramov, BC PL; Mr. Yashar Omarov, RTA Counterpart; Vusala Gurbanova, Leading Specialist, MoE; Ms. Nargiz Garakhanova, Senior Advisor, MoE; Mr. Kamran Rasulov, Senior Advisor, MoE; Ms. Havva Haqverdili, Head of Unit at the Department for Employment Policy and Demographics, Ministry of Labor and Social Protection of Azerbaijan.

13:00 – 14:00

LUNCH

14:30-17:00

Report writing in MoE meeting room

4. Mission report:

4.1 Complementary information to diagnostic of current situation already developed already during the 1st mission within this Activity

This report is based on the information provided in the experts` report mission No.1, review of the documents provided and interviews with the representatives of the Ministry of Education (MoE), Ministry of Economy, Accreditation Department of ANO, Baku Engineering University, Azerbaijan Technical University, as well as with representatives of the employers and national students union.

The information obtained during the meeting with the Department of Science, Higher and Secondary Professional Education, MoE, indicates that higher education system in Azerbaijan has been transforming in accordance with the Bologna Process principles: there is introduced two-tier system - bachelor and master and credit points.

Since 2010 studies are offered for fees and for free as state order (30%). There are offered also scholarships for students with higher grades.

In 2013 **the National Strategy for the Development of Education in the Republic of Azerbaijan was approved, consequently in 2015 the Action Plan on the Implementation of the National Strategy for the Development of Education in the Republic of Azerbaijan was approved.** According to the National Strategy there are five targets set:

1. Creating content of competency-based personality-oriented education
2. Develop highly influential educators to ensure the effective acquisition of the educational content through innovative learning methods and technologies that take into account the individual characteristics of learners
3. Formation of the public policy administration system with responsible, transparent and effective regulation mechanisms, based on state-business partnership
4. Creation of modern education infrastructure that ensures lifelong learning
5. Create a new mechanism for sustainable and multi-sources funding of education

The Action plan includes specific targets, activities, principles of the implementation, implementation period and responsible institutions for the implementation of each target. However, there are no any indicators for the measurement of the progress.

The meeting with the **minister for education confirms that there is strong setting to achieve the targets and many activities are in the process**, for example, they have already been working on supply and demand approach system.

According to the information provided by the MoE there is a list of qualifications (occupations), which are under review now due to the changes in the labour market. In addition, it is worth to mention that previously an agreement between the MoE and Ministry of Labour was introduced

with aim to review the graduates progress in the labour market – how many and where graduates are working, however it has not worked anymore.

There is a slight progress in the data collection from higher education institutions, these data are taken into account for the enrolment of students as the MoE stated. However, these data are quite general and do not provide detailed information which is necessary for the analyses of the students, graduates, academic staff etc., in order to make forecasts and prepare graduates with competences and skills in compliance with labour market needs.

Another aspect, which actually hinders to ensure higher education programmes in compliance with labour market needs, is education standards with approval term on 5 years, which does not facilitate enhancement of the quality of higher education. Besides, the content of education standard is developed for each study programme and it is very detailed and seems to be as study programme curricula. Education standards should be more comprehensive and general, for the certain level of education or it could be for certain field of education. **Nowadays, when labour market needs are changing rapidly, it is essential to adapt the content of study programmes to the labour market needs, so that graduates have necessary knowledge, skills and competences.** Every year study programmes should be revised, and stakeholders as employers and students should be involved in the revision process, in order to ensure that learning outcomes are in compliance with labour market needs and research trends.

During the interviews with representatives of the Baku Engineering University and Azerbaijan Technical University it was observed that **universities are looking for the cooperation with employers**, currently mainly with the purpose to provide internships for students and their further employability. Universities organise meetings with industry, conclude cooperation agreements, organise career days and try to involve employers to study process, for example, inviting them to participate at the exams. However, universities would like that industry is more involved in study process by providing expertise in the labour market needs, what competences are needed, what disciplines or themes could be included in the content of study programmes.

Meeting with the representative of employers, i.e. Deloitte, confirms that interest in cooperation between industry and higher education institutions is mutual, however it depends on individual interest. Employers mentioned that they would like that universities would come with ideas and questions on the necessary skills and competences of students. Therefore, universities do not use the full potential of labour market intelligence. Usually National Employers confederation plays an important in the linkage between education and labour market, however, representative of Deloitte has no information about such organisation in Azerbaijan. As we found out, Azerbaijan National Confederation exists, but it seems that its goal and mission should be reviewed, its activity should be restarted in order confederation becomes more visible and considerable.

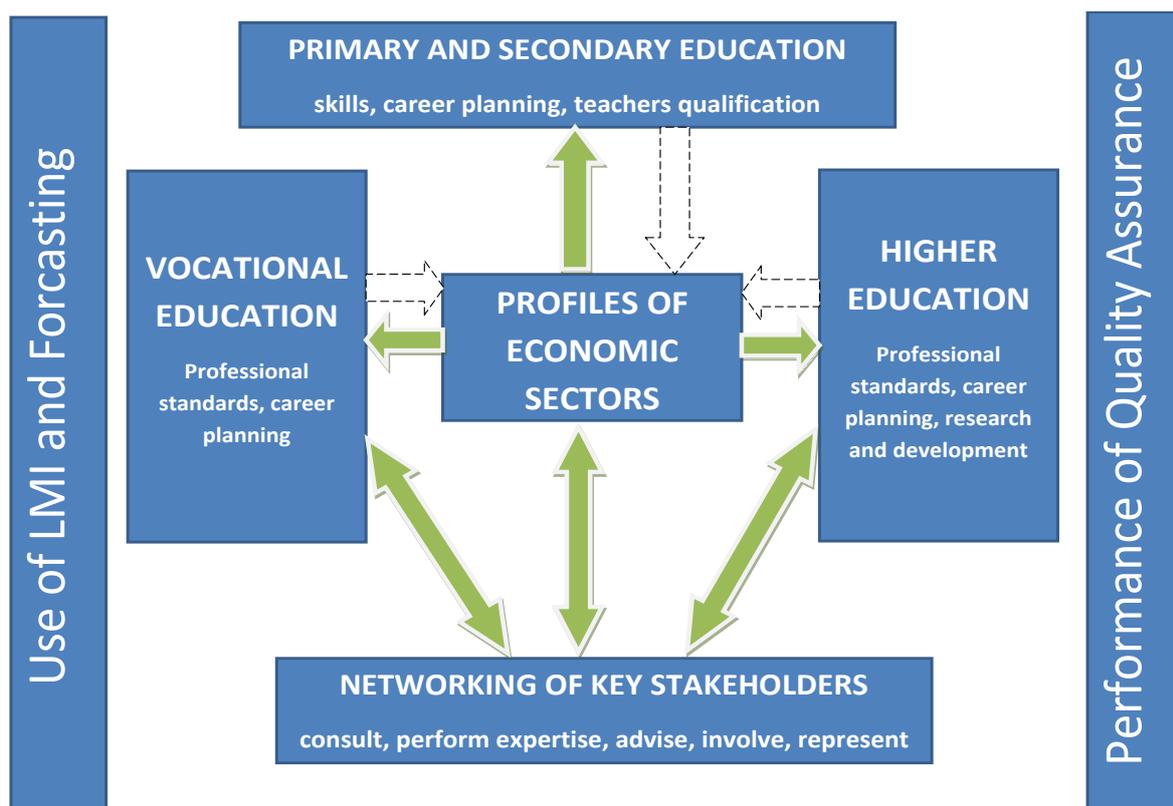
Thus, it is obvious that cooperation between universities and industry is mutually supported, both universities and industry carry out separate activities in order to strengthen mutual cooperation, to ensure link between education and labour market. However, **lack of the system, which ensures involvement of all stakeholders and implementation of regular activities on the national level, definitely do not facilitate high quality higher education which is in compliance with labour market needs.**

Besides, it is worth to note that one of the Bologna Process key elements is quality assurance of higher education. The ministers responsible for higher education adopted the revised Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG) in 2015. **The ESG emphasize the involvement of employers and students in the quality assurance process, therefore the employers and students should be involved in all steps of higher education.** The interviews with representatives with employers and with Students Union show that neither employer neither students are involved in the quality assurance of higher education, therefore labour market intelligence is not fully used.

4.2 A proposal regarding the model for use of labour market intelligence by the Ministry of Education in Azerbaijan

As it is stated in the section 4.1. of this report, during the mission we defined that relation of higher education to labour market primarily focuses on hiring for job openings based on the employers` goals. Separate elements of the system exist, however, a further step related to human resource planning taking into account potential unseen demand in the future and skills demand side is not developed. Therefore, **it is suggested to expand the existing system** (see Figure 1)

Figure 1. The Operational Framework of Labour Market Intelligence and Forecast System



It is important to notice that, when skills planning goes beyond, it is necessary to understand other drivers that may influence the forecast – and what affect skills demand and skills supply. Without evidence-based planning any investment to ensure that those demands are satisfied by

the supply will be risky. This is why we recommend involving all stakeholders and decision-makers to cooperate in creating and developing labour market intelligence and forecasting system. **Networking among all stakeholders** - Ministry of Education, Ministry of Labour and Social Protection, Ministry of Economy, Employers (National Employers Confederation), National Students Union and Rectors Conference-, **is essential for labour market intelligence and forecasting system** (hereinafter System). Labour market information leads to an informed decision, it benefits the individual, the employer and the conomy.

- **Firstly**, we suggest to identify the needs of all target groups for Labour market intelligence (LMI). Recommendations were provided during the last discussion with the stakeholders at the MoE. LMI is a crucial input to informed decisions at the national and local levels, it can support the needs of business establishments for recruiting, it can improve work processes and services, expansion and location planning, and employee skills development, determine higher education programme offer, curriculum design, and career services to students. **Identification of the final needs of target groups is crucial for the principals of the System.**
- **Secondly**, we recommend to **consider defining performance based indicators for the National Strategy for the Development of Education of the Republic of Azerbaijan** (hereinafter Strategy). We reviewed the targets and measurements and found out that they have been orientated to the competence based approach. Therefore, **indicators for measurement of progress are essential in monitoring the process of implementation related to the development of skills and competencies** (see Figure 2).

Figure 2. Recommendation of Indicators for Strategy

Target indicated in Strategy	Proposals for Indicators (to measure the progress)
1. Creating content of competency-based personality-oriented education	Children` achievements at secondary school (results of the exams) Employability of graduates (%) Satisfaction of students (%)
2. Develop highly influential educators to ensure the effective acquisition of the educational content through innovative learning methods and technologies that take into account the individual characteristics of learners	Level of entrance to studies (incl .teachers programmes) Number of students working as teachers after graduation
3. Formation of the public policy administration system with responsible, transparent and effective regulation mechanisms, based on state-business partnership	Satisfaction of employers with quality of education (%) Linkage between level of qualification and employment (%)
4. Creation of modern education infrastructure that ensures lifelong learning	Lifelong learning (adults at higher and vocational education)

	Recognition of previous experience/education (%) Professional development of teachers (%)
5. Create a new mechanism for sustainable and multi-sources funding of education	State funding per 1 student

In addition, **general indicators for strategic goal should be kept in mind:**

For education:

- Rates of early school leavers below xx %
- At least xx % of people aged 30-34 having completed higher education

For social inclusion and employment:

- At least xx % fewer people in – or at risk of – poverty/social exclusion
- Xx 5 of people aged 20-64 to be in work

For research and development:

- xx % of GDP to be invested in R&D

The proposed general indicators are partially aligned with goals set in the Europe 2030, therefore MoE could define indicators in accordance with their targets and needs.

- **Thirdly**, we have also evaluated the existing national system of statistics and the statistics which is provided by state universities and additional information gathered by the MoE and consider that the data provided in Figure 3 might be discussed among the national bodies and university rectors, and **data should be gathered annually**.

Figure 3. Recommendations for Improving of Data Collection from Higher Education Institutions

Students					
General information	Number in each study programme	Gender	State budget/ study fees	Drop outs	Mobility in/out
Enrolled (1st year) students	Number in each study programme	Gender	State budget/ study fees	By region	
Qualifications/degree awarded	Number in each study programme	Gender	State budget/ study fees	Graduated in time	
Academic staff					
	Position	Scientific degree	Workload (full-time, part-time)	Age	Mobility in/out
Research and development					
	Number of doctoral students	Number of researchers	Number of national and international projects	Number of research projects with business	Number of patents
Funding					

	State budget	Study fees			
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Considering the fact that higher education institutions have been already providing some data to the MoE, it is just necessary to broad the scope of data which institutions would provide annually.

We believe that for making informed decisions on the national level and for making forecasts, regular data collection is the first step for developing System. In addition, we recommend **to supplement the data collection** (see Figure 3) with in-depth interviews with key stakeholders involved in the labour market and education sector with perceptive insights. **Statistics Unit of MoE could make annual analyses on the educational demand and supply and also publish summary report, which helps people to make informed choices, as people need comprehensive information and advice about education and work opportunities and their relevance to labour market.**

- **As a fourth point**, we recommend to involve both employers and students in **quality assurance process** in accordance with ESG. The MoE should revise current system and in cooperation with stakeholders – higher education institutions, employers, students, to make changes in compliance with ESG. Involvement of employers in the design of study programmes, in the regular review of programme, in the formulating learning outcomes, that all ensure the compliance of higher education with labour market needs, so that graduates have knowledge, skills and competences for being competitive in the global labour market.
- **As a fifth point**, we would like to pay attention to the **development of education standards and professional (occupation) standards**. It is essential that study programme curricula are based on both of these standards, therefore these standards could not be contradictory. Education standard should be more general and provide framework setting the common learning outcomes for certain level (or certain field), but not detailed curricula as it should be responsibility of higher education institution. While the professional standard should include description of skills and competences which are necessary for certain profession. From the interviews with MoE and Ministry of Economy it became clear that both standards were developed separately without joint discussions. Therefore, **we recommend to establish joint working group or committee in order to review all standards** to ensure that are in compliance with needs of labour market and educational sector.

4.3 Other recommendations for future missions regarding how to further strengthen capacity of BC in this field

The recommendations mentioned above are at the system level and also at individual level, providing concrete steps. For building the System it is necessary to start with smaller steps as regular data collection, annual surveys of students and employers, which are organised at national level.

As the next step we recommend to discuss the mechanism of data collection and surveys with Statistics Unit of MoE and other involved stakeholders.

In order to facilitate the quality of higher education, MoE, Rectors Conference, Employers and students have to agree on the model of quality assurance.

As sectoral councils are developing, it would be necessary to analyse their responsibilities and possibilities for the involvement in the education process.