Support to strengthening the higher education system in Azerbaijan

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Twinning project ENI/2018/395-401

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**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 the Mission Report of Activity 1.3.2, 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 |  |  |  |

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