Current Problems in the Technical and Vocational Education Management System in Kazakhstan

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Abstract

The reactive nature of the technical and vocational education management, which is manifested in the delayed reaction to the processes, events and phenomena occurring in all sectors of the national economy, is revealed in this article. Also the problems of the formation of technical and vocational education system, ensuring the quality of staff training, the search for new forms of quality assessment, based on the relationships with the environment and meeting the employers’ interests, are considered in the article. As a result of the research to address the issues raised and improve the technical and vocational education system in Kazakhstan, a model of technical and vocational education management in the regions is proposed by the authors.

Keywords: Quality Improvement; Quality Assessment; Employers; Economic Efficiency; External Environment; Monitoring; Modeling

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INTRODUCTION

This study is aimed at the theoretical rationale for the modeling of technical and vocational education at the regional level.

To achieve this goal the following tasks were addressed:

- To analyze the role and the importance of the technical and vocational education system at the modern stage as the social labor performance multiplying factor;
- To consider the possibility of the technical and vocational education quality improvement with the help of external evaluation by society and the state;
- To define the priorities in the improvement of the technical and vocational education cost-effectiveness, providing the coordination and unity of control measures for different functional areas;
- To model the regional technical and vocational education management system in the aspect of new approaches to the education quality assessment.

The scientific novelty of the research results is as follows: the priority directions in technical and vocational education improvement were defined; the domination of foreign component in the system of the technical and vocational education quality assessment was justified; the technical and vocational education management at the regional level was modeled.

The rationalization of the education system through the development and use of some of the provisions of the general management theory (the “planning –
programming – budgeting” system).

The improvement of the training process management is considered as one of the main ways of efficient use of material and human resources. The most active is the development of new forms of organization and management based on PPB principles in the United States of America, where a special research center was established at the University of Oregon. The purpose of the PPB system is to determine the effectiveness of costs based on the correlation of the costs allocated to the implementation of programs and the degree of achievement of the set objectives.

In many countries, regardless of their level of socio-economic development (for example, in Australia, Germany, China, Netherlands, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan and Ukraine), the initial vocational education is integrated with the complete secondary one, and the vocational education is integrated with the higher education. The complete secondary education continues to perform the dual challenge: to prepare the individual not only for admission to the universities, but also for the active life. It is believed that the implementation of this dual challenge will determine the spirit and the content of the secondary education in the 21st century, its diversification and the place to be taken by the general humanitarian and general technical training.

The significant update of the content of the secondary and higher vocational education, aimed at the standardization of curricula and educational programs; the introduction of the system of educational loans (credit points), providing the academic mobility of the students. Within the framework of the Bologna process, the European credit transfer system (ECTS) has already been introduced in Germany, the Netherlands, Belgium, Italy and France; the analogue credit point systems has already been introduced in Austria, Vietnam, Mongolia, Japan, Canada, China, Sweden, the countries of Eastern Europe and the Baltics.

A marked emphasis shift from the administrative and organizational issues to the teaching quality issues, the rapid response of educational systems to the changing needs of society is observed in the activities of the management structures at all levels of education. The complex measures on maintenance of the high quality of education were adopted in France, Germany, Great Britain, and Canada.

The transformation of the education financing system into a powerful economic lever: the adoption of the concept of multi-channel financing (the state budget, the budgets of regional and local authorities, the revenues from the services rendered by the universities and their businesses, the tuition fees, etc.); the replacement of the scholarships and grants by the student loans, guaranteed by the state; the introduction of the principle of mixed funding of the state and private universities; the enhancement of the role of the philanthropic organizations, business organizations, the financing of the education by the citizens; the establishment of the tax incentives for the part of the revenue realized by the educational institutions in order to support the education. The system of targeted funding of the pupils and the students of higher schools is quite well-
developed in such countries as Australia, the Netherlands, France, Italy, Hungary, Japan, USA, Canada [1].

One of the first attempts to find the quantitative measure of the effectiveness of the education with the economic positions belonged to T. Schultz [2]. In accordance with his theory of human capital, the additional economic growth or decline in production is derived from the "investment in the person", including the education expenditures [3].

English scientists William M. Blaug and Woodhall in the implementation of the research program on assessment of the effectiveness of foreign investment in the secondary education in England and in the United States of America attempted to develop the summarizing index for the educational product, analogue to the consumer price index, allowing to evaluate the national education system as a whole [4].

Another method for assessing the cost-effectiveness of education is associated with the name of E. Denison [5], which correlated quantitatively the influence of various growth factors on the growth of the actual national income [6,7].

In the period from 1999 to 2007 the strategy documents were adopted in the country, defining the basic principles, goals, objectives and mechanisms for the phased implementation of the state policy in the field of education and creation of the National System of Education Quality Assessment (NSEQA). By now, as a result of the reforms, the National System of Education Quality Assessment has been developed and is in operation in Kazakhstan, which, according to the Law "On education" is defined as a set of institutional structures, procedures, forms and methods of establishing of the compliance of the education quality with the national educational standards, the needs of the individual, society and the state [2].

According to Article 55, the education quality management is aimed at the implementation of the unified state policy in the field of education and includes the state and institutional structures, constituting the unified national system for assessment the quality of education, the rationality of the use of the funds, allocated for the financing of the education, and overall efficiency of the education system operation. In addition, the education quality management is carried out by the managerial decision-making at all levels on the basis of the education monitoring results, performed by the methods of external and internal assessment of the quality of education [1].

Therefore, the problem of improvement of the technical and vocational education quality and its assessment has not been explored fully. The problems of education quality are the key ones in the development of not only the national systems of education, but also in the cross-country measurement, and the establishment of the education quality assessment system, meeting all the requirements of the scientific approach and taking into account the global trends in this area, requires time and considerable intellectual and financial resources. Its operation will allow the state and the society to obtain the objective information on the condition of the education necessary to ensure the
constitutional rights of the citizens to quality education, will contribute to the radical solution of the problems of conformity of the quality of educational services offered with the established state standards, to the support of the sustainable development of the education.

METHODS

The main provisions of the materialist dialectic and the systemic approach were taken as the methodological basis for study. Along with the scientific methods, the methods of theoretical analysis of the economic and educational literature on the topic of the article, the mental experiment, the socio-diagnostic methods (surveys, monitoring, testing, interviewing), the mathematical methods of survey data statistical processing will be used.

How can the Quality of Technical and Vocational Education be Improved?

Today, it becomes more and more obvious that the improvement of the quality of education is necessary in order to carry out the main purpose of the vocational education – the education of a skilled worker of the appropriate level and profile, competent, responsible, fluent in profession and oriented in the related sectors of activity, able to work effectively on specialty to the world standards, ready for continuous specialist growth.

Along with this, the problem of the technical and vocational education quality assessment by the consumers, the employers (in the labour market) and the specialists is essential today. Undoubtedly, the technical and vocational education quality assessment by the employers is a feedback channel to the labor market, determining the quality characteristics of the specialists during their active employment. It should be borne in mind that the requirements for specialist skills on the part of the employers are constantly changing due to the socio-economic, political, scientific and technological development of the society and the state. In this regard, the education quality assessment on the part of the employers, in our opinion, should be regular, to be able to introduce timely the necessary changes into the education process. This raises the need for inclusion in the system of external monitoring and assessment of the procedures, uncharacteristic currently for the national education system, the assessment of the education quality of the specialist by the external customers – the society, the employers, the beneficiaries of the educational services. Such innovations in the approaches to the quality assessment are the mechanisms, stimulating the growth of responsibility of the technical and vocational education institutions for the quality of education [5].

In order to overcome the growing gap between the content of education, educational technology, the structure of the educational sphere, the level of its human resources potential and the challenges of the new economy, the need for the mechanisms, aimed
at ensuring the competitiveness of the educational sphere product in the labor market, increases.

However, the results of the interview of the university students and the students of the colleges and vocational schools in the region show that:

- 50% of the university students, 48% of the college students and 46% of the vocational school students deny the role of the career guidance work of the school in which they were educated, in the choice of profession;
- 54% of the university students, 38% of the college students and 30% of the vocational school students had the incomplete picture of the profession chosen;
- 34% of the university students, 54% of the college students and 38% of the vocational school students chose the further training in related specialties;
- 76% of the university students, 54% of the college students, 50% of the vocational school students plan to work in the specialty after completion of the education;
- 80% of the university students, 72% of the college students, 70% of the vocational school students consider the interning as a chance to find a job at the place of interning.

Additionally:

- 50% of the university students, 44% of the college students and 52% of the vocational school students have a superficial understanding of the existing vacancies in the labor market;
- 96% of the university students, 90% of the college students and 88% of the vocational school students use the media, friends and family as the informative sources of the existing vacancies in the labor market;
- 50% of the university students, 52% of the college students and 46% of the vocational school students plan the employment through a direct appeal to the enterprise;
- 22% of the university students, 6% of the college students and 14% of the vocational school students plan the employment with the support of an educational institution;
- 90% of the university students, 66% of the college students and 76% of the vocational school students are satisfied with the quality of the educational process;
- 54% of the university students, 36% of the college students and 36% of the vocational school students suppose the knowledge and skills obtained in the process of education to be insufficient for the further employment and career development;
- 28% of the university students, 8% of the college students and 12% of the vocational school students plan the employment without further training;
- Only 8% of the university students, 4% of the college students, 2% of the vocational school students suppose the employment centers to be the help in the employment.
Therefore, the following provisions are of particular relevance for the sphere of technical and vocational education in the region:

1. The need to strengthen the work on specialist orientation of the school graduates in order to enhance the awareness in the choice of profession.
2. The enhancement of the social partnership mechanism.
3. The enhancement of the awareness of the population of the region in the prospective personnel needs of the labor market.
4. The strengthening of the role of the employment centers.
5. The introduction of the marketing research system in the activities of the educational institutions.

The brief analysis clearly shows the absence of the proper relationship between the system of education of the specialists for the region's economy and the production units. The human resources potential management in the Pavlodar region requires not only the continuous monitoring of the labor market and the education market, including the information on compliance of supply and demand for the labor resources according to the profile and the qualification level in the context of specialties (professions), the information on the causes of the imbalance of the labor market, but also the motivation and specialist orientation of the school graduates in the sphere of profession choice, as well as the enhancement of the public awareness of the prospective needs of the region's economy in the specialists.

In our opinion, the first essential step should be the construction of the feedback based on the shift of the focus of the management from the correct alignment of the education processes to the achievement of the certain results and the socially significant effects, as the efforts of the education management bodies are mainly focused on the desire to provide the quality of the programs prior to their implementation, rather than on the effectiveness of the educational outcomes from the implementation of these programs. The second step of equal importance should be the understanding of the new aspects of social responsibility of the business, which should be reflected in the employers' responsibility for the objectivity of the order for the education of the human resources by the regional technical and vocational education systems and their further employment [8].

The third important step, in our opinion, should be the shift of the focus in the management of the specialist personnel education for the regional economy in the direction of the sector departments, which will take the role of the customer and the administrators of the educational programs, and, at the same time, will control the quality of order execution. This, in our view, will differentiate the functions of the customer and the executor and, at the same time, will create the conditions for the formation of the independent specialist agencies to assess the quality of the human resources, trained by the technical and vocational education system [9].
What is the technical and vocational education "quality assessment"?

Meanwhile, the concept of "education quality" has no universally accepted definition. This is quite natural, since the different groups of the educational services consumers put their own meaning in it, but the researchers interpret it depending on the objectives of the study. However, two main approaches to the concept of quality can be distinguished:

- In the first case it is considered from the standpoint of compliance with the state educational standards, and the quality conditions of the educational process;
- In the second case it is interpreted as the compliance with the requirements and expectations of the external customers and the consumers.

It should be recognized that the quality assessment system currently existing in the technical and vocational education system is far from perfection. After graduating from the vocational school or vocational lyceum the students take the final qualification exams assessed by the State Examination Committee. These exams are not standardized and are not related closely to the qualification requirements, applied to the graduates by the actual economy sector. The graduates, having successfully passed the training course, are given the diplomas, providing the right to work in the chosen profession or to continue the education at the following stages of the educational chain: in the college or in the higher school [10].

Thus, the final assessment solves neither the problem of an objective assessment of the results of the education, nor the problem of informing of the future employers on the real competences of the graduates. At the college level, there is also no objective external information on the condition of the education. According to the requirements of the state educational standards, all colleges organize within the educational process the internal exams on certain subjects. At the different courses of study, the students take exams on the general studies subjects, the general humanitarian subjects, social and economic subjects, general specialist and special subjects.

However, in reality, the content of the examinations and the assessment criteria differ significantly from college to college. Firstly, the examinations are conducted by the teachers who taught the subject. Secondly, there is no standardized methodology for assessment of the technological and educational advances that could be used in these exams. At the end of the educational process in the college, all students pass the state exam in the form of defense of the specialist graduation thesis or passing of the state exams, assessed by the Special State Examination Committee (SEC). The SEC Chairman is invited sidewise; usually, he or she is the representative of the employers or the prominent specialist in the field of directions of the education of the specific college. The remaining SEC members are the college professors. The assessment is performed collectively.
However, the practice shows that in case of admission of the student to the state examinations, the student is assessed positively anyway. Thus, despite the invitation of the external SEC Chairman, there are doubts as to the objectivity of the examination system. Here, in our view, the principle is observed: the assessment of the work performed is carried out by the performer itself.

In this regard, consider the constituent elements of the external environment of the technical and vocational education, forming in a complex the external quality evaluation system.

**The authorities:** The formal assessment of the functioning of the technical and vocational education system on the part of the management authorities of both national and regional levels and the appropriate mechanisms are practically absent. Based on the foregoing, it is advisable to summarize the experience of the regions and to develop on this basis the typical model of the organization of the quality assessment of activities in the field of the technical and vocational education. Along with this, it is important to initiate from the part of the authorities the generation of the independent organizations, including the non-governmental ones, engaged in the technical and vocational education quality assessment with the participation of the specialist communities, the definition of their status and responsibilities; it ultimately involves the construction of the regional education quality management system, including both the management models, the mechanisms of assessment and quality assurance and the analytical informational assessment systems [11].

This corresponds to the Revised Recommendation on Technical and Vocational Education Organization of the United Nations of 19 November, 1974, the paragraph 17 of which contains the recommendation to provide the assessment, inspection and accreditation services, staffed by the specialists in the field of technical and vocational education, within the administrative structures [12] for the rapid implementation of the new research findings and to support the standards:

a) The assessment services should, in the whole, ensure the high-quality and successful implementation of the technical and vocational education by continuous review and measures, directed to the constant improvement of the staff, conditions and programs;

b) The staff inspection services should encourage the improvement of the teaching quality by the guidance and consultation as well as through the recommendation of the further education [13].

Also the regional education quality assessment systems may involve such services as the resource centers, the employment centers, the centers for socio-psychological and valeological research, the student-centered education system design institutions and other organizations. However, at the regional level, in our opinion, the mechanism for transmission of the authorities of the state customer for the staff education by the technical and vocational education system to regional sectoral administrations should
be implemented.

The society: It should be emphasized that, on the one hand, the important factor for the successful development of the regional educational systems is the wide participation of the employers, the public organizations, the educational communities, and the population in these processes. One of the main conditions of such participation is the "transparency" of the activities of the territorial body of the education administration, the comprehensiveness and the accessibility of the information for all the social partners of the technical and vocational education system.

That is why the information on the status and trends of regional technical and vocational education system generated in the framework of the monitoring studies should be presented to the major customers and consumers, the social partners of the education. The monitoring information submission format is determined by the characteristics of the readiness of the various target groups to the perception of this type of information, comprising:

- The level of education of the population (the average number of the years spent by each adult resident in the stationery educational institution), including the level of vocational education of the population;
- The availability of the education to every citizen of the country: financial, territorial, etc. – by the levels of the educational programs;
- The influence of the vocational education on the level of employment, unemployment, the level of gross domestic product, etc.;
- The influence of the education, including the vocational education, on the development of the civil society, the reduction of the social tension, the number of offenses committed, etc.

On the other hand, the vocational education provides the individual with the opportunity to creative participation in the social production and, in accordance with Art. 25 of the UN Recommendations, as the preparation for the specialist activity, should be the basis for productive and satisfying careers and allowing:

a) The acquisition of broad knowledge and basic skills, applicable to a number of professions in the field, so that the individual would not be limited by the education in the free choice of profession and could easily move from one field to another during the working life;

b) To provide at the same time a thorough and specialized preparation for the initial employment and effective training in the course of employment;

c) Provide a foundation in the form of skills, knowledge and attitudes for the further education at any time of the working life of the individual [12].

The production: Obviously, the system of education, focused on the formation of the specialist skills only, cannot comply with the order of the modern society. The new quality of education of the specialists with different levels of vocational education
requires the different criteria for its assessment.

It can be stated, that the knowledge and the skills are just a tiny part of the personality features influencing the success of the activity, the communication, the behavior of the specialist. And while the performance criteria for the education quality of the specialist will be the performance in the subjects, the principals and the teachers of the educational institutions, the students and their parents will continue to address their efforts mainly on this component – the knowledge formation. Therefore, the problem of the quality criteria for the education of the specialists is the key one, determining the orientation of the entire educational process in the educational institution. To solve actually the problem on the orientation of the education to the formation of the new quality of the education of the future specialists, the criteria for the education quality assessment along with the knowledge assessment as well as the other parameters shall be introduced [14].

The internal assessment of the education quality includes the quality management system, a variety of self-assessment of all types of activity of the educational organizations, the ongoing performance monitoring, and the assessment of the educational achievements of the students.

At the same time, speaking about the features of the national education assessment system existing in Kazakhstan, its positive aspects should be highlighted:

• The means of the internal and external (independent) quality assessment of the education outcomes were formed and operate in parallel;
• The system of the indicators for the accreditation of the higher education institutions, comparable with the international analogues and the international standards, was developed;
• The institutional structures, responsible for the education quality assessment, were organized and operate.

But, based on the analysis of the progress of the education reform in the area of improvement of the quality and enhancement of the approaches to its assessment, some conclusions can be made:

• Firstly, the pace of introduction of the new approaches to the education quality assessment in all its fields is different;
• Secondly, the dominant attention in the emerging national education quality assessment system is given to the field of the secondary education;
• Thirdly, the structure of the vocational education in terms of quality and its assessment the higher education sphere is the dominant;
• Fourthly, the methodological developments and the scientific research in the field of enhancement of the education quality and its assessment are devoted mainly to the field of the secondary and higher vocational education.
However, the main criteria for the technical and vocational education quality assessment on the part of the employers, in our view, may be:

- The satisfaction with the education quality and qualification of the graduates of the technical and vocational education institutions;
- The satisfaction with the level of educational programs, their ratio by the number of the graduates of technical and vocational and higher vocational education, their ratio by the industries and professions (specialties);
- The satisfaction with the occupational skill structure of the graduates of the technical and vocational education institutions – the ratio of the demand for the workers and the specialists in every profession, specialty and actual graduation from the vocational education institutions;
- The increase in the profit and profitability of the enterprises at the expense of the reduction of the expenditures on the re-education of the personnel, the reduction of the expenditures on the intra-training in the structure of production costs and expenses, etc.

The personality, as the consumer of the educational services: The quality assessment of the educational services rendered should be the integral part of the educational process in the technical and vocational education, and the development of the specific person in accordance with his or her interests and abilities should be the main function. Students should be involved in the assessment of their own progress, and evaluation of the work performed by a student should include the feedback system, so that a student’s causes for the difficulties in learning could be defined and the corrective measures could be taken [15].

Is There Any Need for the External Quality Control of the Technical and Vocational Education?

The continuous evaluation of the quality of the educational process should be carried out by the representatives of the specialist community. In this case an "external monitoring of the quality" of education is needed:

- the satisfaction/dissatisfaction with the education obtained (or not obtained) – with the level the educational program and the quality of education, as well as with the conditions of the education – the comfort, the personal safety, etc.;
- the satisfaction/dissatisfaction with the education obtained (or not obtained) – with the level the educational program and the quality of education;
- the level of capitalization of the secondary and vocational education obtained, resulting in the increase in personal income (salary) of the person.

In addition, there is a separate problem – the satisfaction with the education obtained of the graduates of the secondary schools and technical and vocational education institutions over time. This information, as we know, can be obtained by means of public
opinion polls in the framework of the monitoring [16].

However, there are some problems in the formation of the effective quality assessment system that have to be resolved:

a) the derogation from the scientific approach to the introduction of the new methods of the education quality management;
b) the advantage of the MES RK controlling functions, given that the range and the effectiveness of the today methods in the field of education control are even tougher, than during the planned economy. The role of the employer, the one of the main consumers of the educational process results, is almost reduced to zero and can be seen only in the quality management system standards, based on the international quality standard ISO 9001:2000 and the institutional accreditation standards, and these two types of assessment are not required for the organization of the education and are based on the voluntary principle [17].

**What is the Place for the External Quality Assessment in the Education System?**

In the RK Law "On Education" the vocational education assessment is defined as "the definition of the compliance of the level of vocational education of the students of the educational institutions, implementing the professional education programs for the technical and vocational, post-secondary education, with the requirements, established by the state obligatory standards for the education." Meanwhile, in the State Program for the Development of Technical and Vocational Education in the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2008-2012 the strict regulation of the state mandatory education standards limits the ability of schools and teachers to react promptly to the changes in the labor market [18].

At the same time, it is emphasized, that the theorized, abstract content of curricula, the outdated teaching techniques provide only the reproducing level of the knowledge assimilation, based on mechanical memory, not stimulating the development of the competency skills, the independence of heuristic quality [19]. Therefore, it is necessary, in our opinion, the introduction in the education legislation of the standards based on provision of the flexibility for the technical and vocational education system, focused equally on the state mandatory standards and requirements, developed by the subjects of the external environment.

Wherein the major procedures for the external quality assessment in accordance with the Law are the following:

- The licensing (in the basic concepts used in the Law, shall not be interpreted);
- The state certification of the educational institutions – the procedure carried out for the purpose of monitoring of the compliance of the educational services, provided by the educational institutions, with the requirements of the state education standards;
• The accreditation of the educational institutions – the procedure for the recognition by the accreditation body of the conformity of the educational services with the established requirements and standards in order to provide the objective information about the quality and to confirm the presence of effective mechanisms for their improvement;
• The uniform national testing – the form of final assessment of the students in the secondary education institutions, combined with the entrance examinations in the educational institutions of post-secondary or higher education;
• The intermediate state control – one of the types of the education quality control independent from the educational organizations [2].

Simulation of the Technical and Vocational Education Management

Figure 1: The model of the system of the technical and vocational education management in the region (the model was compiled by the author).

Consequently, the result of the joint efforts of the participants in the process of further development and improvement of the technical and vocational education, in our view,
should be:

- The creation and implementation of the modern system for certification, assessment, validation of the skills and qualifications of the graduates of the technical and vocational education system;
- The employers’ participation in the decision-making process on the development of the technical and vocational education, the development of the educational programs and the qualification requirements for the graduates of the technical and vocational education system.

In this regard, according to the Figure 1, we can offer the vision of the model of the system of the technical and vocational education management in the region.

CONCLUSION

The modern market-oriented technical and vocational education strategy dictates the need for a transition from the one-stage quality assessment to the quality assurance through the management. In the framework of the education field studied, the pivotal factor of the influence of the external environment towards the condition of the final technical and vocational education product should be the external education quality assessment, which can, in accordance with our proposal, be defined as the objective quality control of the education of the graduates, provided by the discipline-specific quality assessment service, independent from the education management bodies in accordance with state educational standards.

As it was noted earlier, the formation and improvement of the external education quality assessment is of particular relevance today for the technical and vocational education system in the context of the feedback to the labor market. In this regard, the category of the "external control" in the education system, in our opinion, reflects only the hierarchy of one education subsystem in relation to the other, and operates within the boundaries of the system without any connections and outputs to the external environment, i.e., it can be stated, that the monopoly right to the education quality control and assessment, in accordance with the Law, belongs to the RK Ministry of Education and Science, which confirms once again, firstly, the introversion of the system without any feedback from the external environment; secondly, the necessity for the division of the powers in the matter of the educational services rendering and the assessment of the quality of these services [20].

In addition, this Law limits the participation of the subjects of the external environment in the assessment of the vocational education institutions, legally establishing the exception only for the university students, by taking into account their opinion on the quality of education at such educational institution. The introspective behavioral style of the educational institutions and enterprises, formed in the practice of the technical and vocational education system, the lack of successful development cooperation strategies, and the lack of experience in provision of the consulting services to the
educational institutions, have resulted in the fact that the education is carried out in isolation from the needs of the real production. The lack of supporting structures at the institutional and the local levels, which should encourage and promote the cooperation on a regular basis, constitutes the obstacle to the development of the social partnership [21].

This wording should become the important step towards the further renewal and improvement of the technical and vocational education and the enhancement of its economic efficiency.

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