

# THE LABOR-MARKET DEMAND STANDARDS IN ACADEMIC EDUCATION

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**ABSTRACT:** The article focuses on the problem of the implementation of labor demand market standards in higher education system in Armenia. The new jobs require new qualifications which should be developed via transdisciplinary academic curricula. The labor market has set up new demands for the language proficiency for the new jobs. The flexibility as well as the orientation to European standards will provide the economic system of the country with the possibility to better use the human resources and decrease the unemployment rates. The input and the output of the use of new generic and specific competences should be targeted at providing the labor market with highly qualified specialists.

**KEY WORDS:** Harmonization, Trans-Disciplinarity, Competency-Based, Matching, Flexibility

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The development of the international labor market makes new demands on traditional specialties as well as creates the preconditions for the elaboration of new professions and occupations. The requirements for knowledge, competences and skills are diverse for every specialty.

Nowadays, the concept of education is to prepare highly qualified individuals with knowledge of foreign languages, intercultural communication, as well as multi-disciplinary skills. Enterprises have access to qualified staff to increase their productivity and capacity for innovation.

This makes enterprises and regions more competitive and has a positive influence on the investment climate. The employability of people increases, thus improving their chances of finding employment and earning an income.

## 2. MATCHING SKILLS AND JOBS

It is necessary to use innovative teaching, training and learning methodology to foster demand-led standards for specialties. The reasons of lack of academic education for the new demand are:

1. Lack of academic flexibility in curricula;
2. Educational programs do not always favor life-long learning;
3. Lack of necessary analysis of estimating needs of international labor market.

The most important problems that we have to solve are the following:

What is the impact of the Bologna process on long and short higher education programs?

1. How does globalization modify the role that education plays in the economic strategy of the country?
2. How does the international pressure towards harmonization of professional qualifications transform professional higher education?
3. How do different types of labor markets and of arrangements in professional education favor or hinder lifelong learning?

The globalized labour market demands focus on the new paradigm of useable skills especially regarding the new shift of accents in higher education. The reason for the new shift of the

accents is the mobility which is considered to be the most striking process that is taking place all over the world.

Armenian higher education within the 20th century was adapted to the demands of soviet labor market and less attention was paid to the quality of foreign languages at all levels of its studying, the only language that was favored by everyone on the whole territory of the soviet space was Russian, and soviet methodologists did their best to provide the people at all the stages of their studying with solid knowledge of the Russian language, Russian literature and Russian culture.

The foreign language acquisition was limited by a series of leading scholars' methodological reviews which, in most cases, were not aimed at complete acquiring of spoken language. Meanwhile, the most important thing while studying a foreign language is to obtain speaking skills. In higher education institutions the process was targeted at obtaining a certain vocabulary in the professional field for translating the required literature in the field of specialty. In multilingual and multicultural society one needs to be enough skilled to ... effective communication. "First of all there is no awareness of the difference between a language as a subject and a language as medium. Teaching a language, teaching about a language and teaching through a language are not clearly distinguished [1.]".

Nowadays the labor-market has set up new demands for students of higher educational establishments: the foreign language acquisition is a necessary thing to handle international affairs. The globallness has affected all areas of human life, and even in Armenia, thousands of enterprises have been established with a wide range of links with foreign partners. The quality of oral and written communication depends both on the language proficiency but the necessary skills for interpersonal and intercultural communication are also required.

Different jobs require different competence profile, but for all the types of jobs it is necessary to develop an integrated curriculum and provide the upgrading of the skills. Better learning opportunities will contribute to the employability of the specialists and to the economic growth of the country in the whole.

For compiling programs for the new specialties the education experts should take into mind the following questions:

Will the specialty and the job be available in demand in 20 years' time?

What kind of curriculum will be appropriate for this specialty? What kind of skills are required for the job? Will these skills be recognized in the workplace?

Matching skills and jobs is considered to be an urgent problem for any vocational or tertiary educational institution. "Europe needs not only more skills, but also the right skills. As the nature of work changes, employers are increasingly looking for key competences such as creativity, communication and analytical skills, self-management, social aptitudes and the ability to work and communicate in a multi-cultural environment. These competences are not only an asset for economic well-being, but also for personal well-being, citizenship and social cohesion [2]".

In this context the most important thing is the development of the system of anticipation for the new jobs in the future, but the education system must prepare the students not only for the employability but for the need for lifelong learning as well. In order to forecast the needs of tomorrow and see how best they can be met, it is necessary to develop the system of matching and anticipation of skills and jobs. For providing this the Armenian education system should establish links with European and other famous institutions to implement their expertise into the curricula of national educational programs.

Trans-disciplinarity, or blurring of borders between disciplines is one of the most important thing that should be taken into account while elaborating the academic program. Attempts to use multi- and interdisciplinary approaches are the steps forward for the universities to respond to the broader needs and the demands of the contemporary society. "Today's problems are so complex that they cannot be answered using knowledge generated by one discipline or even from interdisciplinary enterprises if the latter are divorced from any connections with actors in civil society [Weislogel, 2007])... Transdisciplinarity combines disciplines, assumes the participation of various stakeholders, academic or not, and takes into account ethical values in the spirit of collaboration and integration. Knowledge creation from a transdisciplinary perspective automatically entails recursiveness and negotiation with non-academic sectors [3]".

The famous Romanian quantum physicist Basarab Nicolescu states that "Disciplinarity, multidisciplinary, interdisciplinarity and transdisciplinarity are like four arrows shot from but a single bow: knowledge [4]". The transnational, transcultural, transreligious, transpolitical attitudes should be used while compiling the academic curricula in the new millennium, which will allow the learners to better understand the people and the environment at the workplace.

Another obvious thing that should be taken into account is the update of the existing national classifications of occupations. It is necessary to harmonize the existed concepts and definitions of the professions in accordance with the European framework of qualifications. The provision of the new list of the occupations should be done using the joint efforts of all the higher and vocational educational establishments in collaboration with the European experts in this field as well as the institutions. High unemployment rates in the country in many cases are connected with the fact that education system does not reflect labor market needs, whereas the labor market today in Armenia requires educated labor force. But the update of qualification shouldn't be done by the educational institutions in the isolated manner. The investment in education will solve some of the problems of the labor market in order to avoid a waste of human resources.

Among the urgent problems we have mentioned lack of flexibility in the academic curricula. Higher education curriculum designers should balance the contradictory demands such as the need for specialized knowledge and flexibility. Competency-based curriculum will focus on the learning outcomes of the graduates, ie, the academic programs should simulate real job situations. In this way the learner will get the possibility to acquire different types of knowledge, and develop not only specific, but generic competences as well. As Allen van Verden mentions, the higher education graduates are expected to have developed the following five areas of generic competences:

1. Professional expertise: they should become experts in their professional field.
2. Functional flexibility: they have to be able to take up challenges and quickly acquire new knowledge. Graduates must possess the ability to cope with various changes in the job content, be mobile within the organization and to other organizations, etc.
3. Innovation and knowledge management: they are expected to do more than just the prescribed tasks – to create an environment in which knowledge production is effective and manage innovation.
4. Mobilisation of human resources: they are to be able to mobilize capacities of their own and others, as well as direct one's own others work.
5. International orientation: they should possess strong international orientation due to globalization processes [5], [6].

These are the "learning outcomes" which should be formed in various courses and achieved at different stages of any higher educational program. Future jobs require higher levels of proficiency, new skills and competences that will be in demand in the twenty years period based on the EU priorities for future labour market needs. Higher education and training systems must develop new skills, to respond to the new requirements which are expected to be created to improve the adaptability and employability of graduates already in the labor force. But it should be mentioned that new skills are to be developed not only at universities, but at an early-childhood and school stages. Hence, the prerequisites for the better quality of jobs are to be taken at pre-university stages.

To strengthen policy cooperation and open it to new challenges, we should adapt our standards to new occupational needs and skills according to the requirements that have been proposed by European Commission. Future European cooperation in education and training should address the following four strategic challenges: qualifications.

- Making lifelong learning and learner mobility a reality.
- Improving the quality and efficiency of provision and outcomes of education and training.
- Promoting equality and active citizenship.
- Enhancing innovation and creativity, including entrepreneurship, at all levels of education and training [7].

For writing new standards for new jobs, hence, the most obvious thing that should be done is the cooperation with various Universities from different countries, as well as with various stakeholders who are interested in the quality of "learning outcomes" of graduate students. We need to fully utilize education resources in order to tailor the human resources to the needs of economic development, direct our

efforts to the promotion of quality-oriented education, stress cultivation of practical abilities, and make efforts in improving education quality, so as to train specialists for the modernized demands of the global society.

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