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Developing Skilled Workforce through Dual Education System for Free Economic Zones

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ABSTRACT

This thesis emphasizes the importance of training skilled workers in enhancing the effectiveness of Free Economic Zones (FEZ). In this context, the dual education system—combining theoretical knowledge with practical training—emerges as a promising mechanism for developing a workforce that meets the needs of FEZ. The research identifies existing challenges such as the insufficient connection between education and production, the low involvement of employers in the educational process, and the mismatch of qualification standards with modern requirements. Furthermore, the thesis explores the effective approaches of integrating dual education into FEZ activities, drawing from the experiences of Germany and South Korea. Proposed solutions include developing educational programs based on public-private partnerships, establishing practical training bases in collaboration with FEZ-based enterprises, and creating industry-specific educational curricula.

Keywords: Free Economic Zones, dual education system, skilled workforce, practical training, education and business collaboration, workforce development strategy, innovative education, public-private partnership, vocational education, competitiveness.

Introduction

In the context of global economic integration and intensified competition, Free Economic Zones (FEZ) play a vital role as an innovative and industrial segment of national economies. The effectiveness of FEZs largely depends on the ability to supply enterprises operating in these zones with highly skilled workers who possess modern competencies. In Uzbekistan, FEZs are crucial for boosting industrial potential, expanding exports, and attracting investments. However, there are several challenges related to providing competitive and well-prepared labor for these zones, as the existing education system does not fully meet the needs of enterprises. Thus, it becomes essential to introduce the dual education system—an approach based on aligning educational processes with real-world production needs. This system strengthens the connection between education and industry, while also facilitating the smooth integration of young people into the labor market.

This paper analyzes the pressing issues and provides practical solutions for preparing skilled labor

for FEZs through the dual education system.

The subject of this thesis encompasses two main directions:

- ✓ The development of FEZs and their economic and social impacts.
- ✓ Integration of vocational education and production through the dual education system.

Research by international and local scholars highlights several key aspects of these issues. International scholars, such as Michael Porter (USA), have developed theoretical foundations for the development of FEZs as economic spaces. Paul Krugman (Nobel laureate) has contributed theories on regional economics and industrial clusters, as well as the location and economic impact of FEZs. Hans-Dieter Kühn (Germany) analyzed Germany's dual education system and its success factors. Philippe Aghion and Peter Howitt have explored innovation economics and the relationship between education and industry, emphasizing the role of human capital in economic growth.

Uzbek scholars, such as X.R. Xudoyberganov, have conducted studies on the economic efficiency of FEZs and their macroeconomic impacts. S. Vahobov has researched the labor market and human capital development, specifically focusing on dual education and workforce issues. M. To'ychiyev has investigated investment climates and workforce potential development within FEZs.

Challenges and Solutions in Preparing Skilled Labor for FEZs through the Dual Education System

Several challenges emerge when preparing skilled labor for FEZs using the dual education system. A key issue is the lack of cohesive collaboration between educational institutions and enterprises operating within FEZs. As a result, educational programs often fail to meet the real needs of industries, and students' practical experience does not align with technological processes in FEZs.

Moreover, enterprises in FEZs are often not actively involved in the educational process, which hinders students' adaptation to real work environments and their development of necessary work skills. Additionally, the material and technical bases of educational institutions frequently fail to meet the demands of modern production, limiting students' ability to acquire high-level practical knowledge and skills.

The institutional and legal framework for dual education has not been fully developed in Uzbekistan. There is a lack of mechanisms to encourage collaboration between educational institutions and enterprises, such as tax incentives or other supportive measures.

Furthermore, there is a general lack of interest in vocational education, particularly in practical production-oriented fields, among young people. This is largely due to the insufficient promotion of vocational labor's social status in society.

To address these challenges, rapid solutions are necessary. Implementing the dual education system in FEZs is of strategic importance for preparing competitive, production-ready workers. However, the successful operation of this system requires a comprehensive approach to addressing the existing issues.

Proposed Solutions

1. Strengthening the Collaboration Between Educational Institutions and Enterprises:

It is crucial to develop educational curricula in direct collaboration with FEZ-based enterprises. The establishment of industry-specific vocational tracks and the introduction of "enterprise-based education" models are recommended.

2. Encouraging Enterprise Involvement in Education:

Measures should be developed to encourage enterprises to participate actively in the educational process. This could include offering tax incentives or other financial benefits in exchange for enterprises supporting internships, mentoring, and practical training opportunities.

3. Modernizing the Material and Technical Base of Educational Institutions:

Establishing innovative training centers based on public-private partnerships and equipping practical training facilities with modern technologies would significantly improve the quality of vocational education.

4. Institutionalizing Dual Education:

The development of specific laws, regulatory documents, and contractual frameworks for collaboration between educational institutions and enterprises is essential to support the dual education system.

5. Promoting Vocational Education Among Youth:

Public awareness campaigns should aim to raise the social status of vocational professions. Implementing scholarship programs, contests, and other incentives for students pursuing dual education will encourage greater interest in vocational training.

6. Improving the Qualifications of Educators:

Educators should be provided with opportunities for professional development by participating in training courses at FEZ-based enterprises and engaging in practical production processes.

7. Studying International Experience:

Analyzing the successful models of dual education in countries such as Germany, South Korea, and Switzerland and adapting their best practices to the Uzbek context will be essential for the successful implementation of the system.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the successful operation of Free Economic Zones largely depends on the availability of skilled workers equipped with modern production competencies. The dual education system proves to be the most effective approach for preparing such workers. However, for the system to function fully in Uzbekistan, several issues must be addressed, including strengthening collaboration between education and industry, engaging enterprises in the educational process, modernizing technical facilities, improving legal frameworks, and changing societal attitudes toward vocational education.

By improving teacher qualifications and adopting international best practices, the effectiveness of the dual education system can be significantly increased, ultimately contributing to the competitiveness of FEZs and the overall economic development of the country.

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