Organisation of practical training in institutions of vocational education

Summary

The performance audit unit of the State Audit Office audited the organization of practical training at vocational educational institutions in 1999-2001.

The objective of the audit was to assess whether the practical training organized Ministry of Education and vocational educational institutions was expedient and met with the labor market requirements.

The State Audit Office made the following conclusions and recommendations.

The Minister of Education has not established explicit requirements for the organization of vocational education and therefore it is quite obvious that there are no provisions that would regulate the organization of practical training at vocational educational institutions. This has created a situation where each vocational educational institution proceeds in line with the priorities of its own when organizing practical training, therefore students learning similar subjects will obtain different professional training and the practical skills and experiences of thereof are different and won't provide them with equal opportunities on the labor market.

The State Audit Office recommended the Minister of Education to use the state curricula to establish the procedures for the organization of practical training, the scope of such training and the expected results. The Minister of Education responded that the ministry is planning to submit recommendations for the amendment of the Vocational Educational Institutions Act in cooperation with the School Network Bureau by June, 2003. The amendments are aimed at the establishment of more explicit procedures for the organization of practical training and related accountability. Nevertheless, it is still not clear when the national curricula being the basis for the studies shall be elaborated and endorsed.

The Minister of Education has not established minimum requirements for the field training bases of the vocational educational institutions, therefore it is not possible to say whether the investments made by the ministry in the field training bases have been justified and have provided for the best desired result at minimum cost.

The State Audit Office recommended the Minister of Education to develop requirements for the field training bases of the vocational educational institutions by specialties. The Minister of Education promised that the ministry shall use the recommendations made by the School Network Bureau to compile the description of requirements to be established for the field training bases used for the organization of practical training (both the school and in-service practice) which will be considered as the state curricula are being drawn up. The Minister of Education also noted that in October 2002 it is planned to devise the state vocational educational institutions' network development plan, one part of which shall describe the distribution of training areas within the organized school network; the field training bases of the leading education institutions of a given area shall be developed as the first and foremost meaning they will be used as the basis for planning the investments to be made over the next years. Unfortunately the Minister has failed to give neither the deadline to the observed by the Ministry in the process of elaboration of the requirements to be established for the field training bases and specify whether the respective requirements shall be elaborated by specialties.

The Minister of Education has not established explicit requirements for the vocational educational institutions to be observed when organizing the in-plant working experience nor considered with the required number of places for in-plant working experience when endorsing the number of students to be admitted by the institutions.

The State Audit Office recommended the Minister of Education to check the number of places for in-plant working experience available as new specialties are opened and training is contracted for and avoid the admittance of students to specialties with insufficient opportunities for gaining in-plant working experience. The Minister of Education did not comment this recommendation. The Ministry of Education hasn't developed an integrated vocational education quality system and therefore the ministry's supervision over the quality of studies and implementation of practical training has not been systematic. The State Audit Office recommended the Minister of Education to develop criteria for the evaluation of the quality of vocational education.

The Minister of Education replied that the School Network Bureau has developed the criteria for the evaluation of the productivity of vocational educational institutions' management and the evaluation process based on the criteria shall be implemented in autumn this year. Nevertheless, the Minister has not replied when it is intended to develop the integrated system for evaluation of the quality of vocational education and who should initiate the development of such a system.

Neither the Minister of Education nor the vocational educational institutions respond flexibly to the feedback enterprises provide about the skills of the students and fail to use the information as an input to be used for the development of curricula. Also, no measures are being applied for the systematic gathering of feedback concerning the employment rates among the graduates of the vocational educational institutions.

The State Audit Office recommended the Minister of Education to establish a system for gathering feedback concerning the employment rates among the graduates of the vocational educational institutions in cooperation with the vocational educational institutions. For example, the information bases of the Tax Board and Social Insurance Board can be used to learn whether the graduates have had a steady job over the last couple of years. The Minister of Education responded that she considers the gathering of information concerning the employment of the graduates from the vocational educational institutions to be a very important task. The ministry's work plan for the II half of 2002 includes the elaboration and coordination of respective principles. It is still not clear when exactly shall the gathering of the feedback start.

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