"Principals of vocational schools need good arguments to convince company managers to cooperate with VET schools by receiving students for internships."

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http://www.swisscoop.tj/en/Home/Activities_in_Uzbekistan/Skills_Development

The decisive success factor for establishing training cooperation between companies and vocational schools in the Skills Development Project of SDC in Uzbekistan is to provide the school principals with negotiation arguments. Therefore the management of VET colleges receives training with the aim to acquire skills for entering into dialogue with experts and representatives of the private sector. This training includes the provision of good arguments and documents to convince company managers to begin intensive cooperation with VET colleges:

a) **Research Tools** for colleges to gather accurate information on the needs of the labour market. In joint collaboration with the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection, experts of the SDP developed two tools (methodological recommendations) for colleges that enable them to gain more information on labour market needs and to adapt their curricula accordingly.

b) **Brochures**: SDP supports colleges in designing brochures on their training offer, clearly showing the strength and possibilities in training and education (labs, special training, education of teachers/trainers etc.)

c) *Documentation of success stories: Representatives of the VET sector together with SDP have prepared success stories. They have also been trained on how to convincingly report on their success.* Arguments comprise:
- names of well known companies with which a successful cooperation has been established;
- policies of VET colleges supported by SDP to overcome the doubts, reservations, objections of company managers regarding the idea of students learning and working at companies' workplaces;
- examples of companies which offer a salary or a scholarship to students or which provide them with food or working attire during their internship;
- examples of companies that send experts / engineers as teachers to VET colleges;
- examples / templates of contracts between colleges, students / parents and companies;
- figures on employment contracts for graduates of SDP supported colleges.

Another important argument and success factor of SDP is the establishment of working groups at supported VET colleges. These groups are composed of school teachers and specialists from companies. The working groups represent an important means to develop mutual esteem by commonly engaging in the design of exams, revision of curricula as well as in the creation of in-company training plans for college students. In addition, these working groups organise training for college students provided by company experts, training for college teachers in companies' workshops as well as training for companies' experts in colleges labs.

The SDP successfully applies this approach and achieves remarkable results:
- **Expansion**: SDP is currently expanding its approach to over 20 VET colleges, 40 big companies and over 100 medium and small sized companies.
- **Modern curricula and in-company trainings** are designed by school principals and teachers, together with human resources managers and experts from industrial companies and in close cooperation with the local and central VET authorities. Together they assure that in-company training and school curricula match well.

- Trainees receive a **certificate** of the practical training they underwent with the companies. This certificate is labour market relevant and provides the school leavers with good opportunities to get a job.
- All involved parties develop **mutual esteem** which then paves the ground for intensified cooperation (e.g. further training offers are provided; both parties gain insights on how the others work; training courses given by people from the private sector, etc.).

Questions

1. **Is the "good arguments" approach transferable to other settings, i.e. other environments/ countries?**
   The SDP has created a conducive environment for functional dialogue between VET school representatives and the private sector. In how far will replication in other regions and contexts be possible?

2. **Can the SDP model be applied to all companies?**
   At the participating companies, the SDP is faced with a large number of highly motivated employers. This raises the question whether this is a necessary factor for success, or how the model can also be applied to "ordinary" companies.

3. **How can the SDP model be successfully implemented in less innovative sectors?**
   The project is implemented predominantly in the sector of automated industrial production. This industrial sector is subject to continuous technical development and thus depends on a high degree of innovativity. The question is whether the methods, and thus the achievements, of this successful project can be transferred to other industrial sectors or business lines.