

Application of Vocational Standards in the VET Field: Key Aspects and Risks

Vladimir I. Blinov, Larisa N. Kurteeva and Ayrat I. Satdykov

Abstract--- *The purpose – the analysis of application of vocational standards in professional education in Russia. Authors consider most frequently asked questions in connection with introduction of the document, new to the Russian professional community, – the vocational standard; compare advantages and shortcomings of official and activity approaches of the qualification requirements description; show possibilities of vocational standards use during the developing of duty regulations, assessment of qualification, represent the most difficult surmountable obstacles of mental character which are slowing down development of national system of qualifications of modern Russia. In article the methodology of comparative research on the basis of the analysis of domestic experience of qualifications system development during the Soviet and Post-Soviet periods is used. Methods of collecting empirical information on approaches to the characteristic of qualifications in modern vocational standards and ETKS, EKSD have been chosen; methods of the conceptual and terminological analysis, interpretation and modeling, problem method that has allowed to receive results: to reveal specifics of the technique of Russian vocational standards development, to characterize the arising risks of their application and to plan ways of overcoming risks. The scientific novelty of work consists in consecutive justification of need for transition from pro-Soviet qualification system to functional and activity one. The practical importance consists in justification of advantages of application of vocational standards in Russia.*

Keywords--- *National Qualifications System, Vocational Standards, Vocational Education and Training.*

I. INTRODUCTION

This article contains the interim results within the theme No.27.4353.2017 /SM State assignment of the Ministry of Education and Science of the Russian Federation to the Federal Institute for Educational Development in 2017 "Scientific and methodological support for the vocational standards implementation in the field of professional "Education" activities (reference number - 27.4353.2017/5.1).

In the midterm, but quite foreseeable perspective, the vocational standards should take their place in the new National Qualifications System of Russia, having replaced the morally obsolete rating and qualification systems [1]. This process cannot happen swiftly, since in the field of labor the employee rights, their preference restrictions are still legally inexorably associated with the official public rating and qualification systems. A full transition to vocational standards requires a very scrupulous work on making appropriate changes in legislation.

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II. LITERATURE REVIEW

The functions of vocational standards in different federal laws and documents. There are four application areas in total:

- Formation of HR policy and personnel management;
- Independent assessment of qualifications;
- Development of the federal state educational standards for vocational education and training;
- Development of the vocational training programs [2].

Rules for the development, approval and application of vocational standards, which are approved by the Government Resolution of the Russian Federation under No. 23 of January 22, 2013 (No. 970 as amended on September 23, 2014), state that the vocational standards are applied by employers in the formation of HR policy and personnel management, the organization of employees training and certification, the preparation of job descriptions, works rating, the assessment of employees wage categories, and the establishment of wage systems taking into account the specifics of production, labor and management organization.

In foreign practice, there are different approaches to the development of vocational standards, depending on the conditions of countries development, their goals and expectations of such documents [18]. There are some countries where the concept of "vocational standard" is traditionally not used, but there are other tools to engage in employment and vocational training, when describing and assessing the qualifications [15, 16, 19].

III. MATERIALS AND METHODS

Within the study, the scientific and pedagogical and methodological works of different countries, characterizing the conceptual approaches, methods, techniques and conditions for the introduction of vocational standards were analyzed; a comparison of approaches to standardization procedure in the world of work in the Soviet and post-Soviet periods were made.

Based on the analysis and research materials, the results were summarized and systematized. It was reflected in the preparation of a series of publications and seminars (webinars), and answers to the most frequently asked questions of citizens with posting on the Internet.

IV. STUDY RESULTS

The vocational education ensures the obtaining of necessary qualification, which is identified in the vocational standard. The procedure for independent assessment of qualifications is provided the documentary evidence of the presence of a person's qualifications and ensures the right to claim a certain position in the labor market [3,4]. Of course, neither the fact of having an education, nor the fact of having a certain qualification, can guarantee a person the right to a certain workplace. In one way or another, only the labor market is the main regulator of labor relations. In the simplest case, the desired position should at least be vacant, and other applicants for it should less suit the employer. Thus, the system of qualifications and vocational education and training only creates the conditions for a person to enter the labor market, but does not guarantee that he will occupy the desired position on it [17].

It is obvious that all elements of the national qualifications system should be interrelated. All educational standards and programs should be prepared under the vocational standards, taking into account the requirements of qualification levels [1]. Assessment tools for the independent qualification evaluation procedures in turn should be prepared under the vocational standards [5]. Ideally, and it is a well-known prospect for Russia, the procedures for final state certification in vocational education should coincide with the procedures for independent qualifications evaluation. To date, this is not the case, since the final state certification bodies are not independent, even if the representatives of employers are involved in the relevant commission [7].

The described system of qualifications has become characteristic for many developed countries in the last 50-60 years. Prior to that, there were the qualification systems, which in general can be called professional-official [11]. The professional-official systems are characterized by the existence of their own qualification hierarchies within individual industries: one for the medical profession, one for the workers, one for the teachers, and so on. In this case, the problem of horizontal comparability of skill levels usually was not raised. The labor remuneration was associated with the employee's qualification only within the industry and determined by the position held [6,7,8]. The job responsibilities and other requirements to the employee were described as part of the position. The very fact that the employee held a position, provided him with a salary assigned to a position. It is quite natural that in the conditions of developing payment ideas, which are based on the labor results, this situation could not satisfy the employer. The examples, when the employee received a salary not for the result, but at the nominal value of the occupied position, became more obvious.

The modern production processes, which are subject to the dynamics of constant change due to process upgrading and other factors, were worse provided by human resources constrained the scope of official structures. The modern working conditions demanded the greater staff mobility, which reflected the need for continuous retraining and raising of employees' qualification, increasing their interchangeability, frequent changing job responsibilities.

A new idea of regulating labor relations - vocational standards came in the world of labor. The main thing of this idea was the refusal to divide the positions [17, 20]. It also seems important that the vocational standards describe the activities, and not the person with his duties [9]. The key opportunity is to correlate the specific labor functions with results, which is rarely seen in job descriptions. Another key element in the vocational standards was the lack of a "standard set" of labor actions that determine the position of an employee. The set can be any at the mutual consent of the employee and the employer. Thus, the vocational standards seemed to be a very progressive way of formalizing the division of labor, in which the employee and the employer can regulate the content and scope of the labor functions performed. Wages in this case are made by the piece, depending on the scope of work stipulated in the employment contract [10, 11].

The result of work, as a measure of its fair pay, began to be presented to both employees and employers as a very progressive step towards establishing a truly effective support system, both the staffing of the enterprise and the professional development (career growth) of the employee. Indeed, the full-time duties of the position required the acquisition of all the necessary amount of vocational education at the beginning. The new system made it possible to

realize the idea of discrete acquisition of vocational education (unit and modular, modular-competence approaches in vocational education) [12]. This enabled the employee to reduce the time needed to enter the labor market, combine the acquisition of skills with work, gradually increasing and expanding the scope of labor functions performed.

Of course, this is an ideal scheme, and many employers use this opportunity to attract workers for the part-time employment, cutting the payment of labor under this pretext. For a country like the UK, the part-time employment has taken the alarming proportions. Many people work simultaneously at many enterprises for several hours a week, which adversely affects their free time activities and career opportunities [15].

The anxiety is also caused by, it would seem, a progressive opportunity to receive vocational education discretely. On the one hand, the opportunities and advantages are evident, on the other hand, such features of a person as a decrease in motivation to continue his education become apparent in practice, because it requires the constant self-control and making decisions about continuing education, at the expense of free time. It is well-known widely that such progressive forms of education as online computer courses and other remote technologies are not available to all people precisely because they require a person of constant volitional efforts. Full-time education is more common for a person, since the standard methods of motivation for learning can be used in it [17].

The implementation of vocational standards in Russia has faced many mental factors and despite the fact that the task of developing and implementing vocational standards set by the government has actually been resolved, this achievement cannot be considered effective to the full. Firstly, the main idea of the vocational standard as the standard of professional activities is not implemented in full extend. Just look at the title of "teacher's vocational standard", "lathe operator's vocational standard", "hairdresser's vocational standard" - all these are the vocational standards of employees, not activities, and this manifested itself not only in the names, but also in the content of many vocational standards. Secondly, in the vocational standards, all generalized labor functions are correlated with possible positions. The word "possible", in this case, should be understood literally. The employer has the right to provide a different name to a position, or to entrust the performance of labor duty to an employee who holds a position not related to this generalized labor duty. Except, of course, those cases - the exceptions of which is already mentioned above. Thirdly, the implementation of vocational standards in Russia does not mean the abolition of previous documents regulating the old qualification structures (Unified Managers, specialists and workforce qualification reference book, Unified skills guide for positions of managers, specialists and non-manual workers, wage-rates and skills handbook, etc.) [13]. The qualification system of Russia arose a kind of "dual power" situation, when the documents of completely different directions act simultaneously, often contradict each other.

A serious concern is expressed by Russian trade unions - the structures designed to protect the rights of workers. You cannot disagree with their anxiety. All social preferences for workers today are correlated with their positions, rather than with the generalized labor duties. Therefore, the position, as before, occupies an important place in the system of labor relations, although the concept of vocational standards should take an irrelevant place, become an atavism that does not contain the important duties. Apparently, one or more reforms of labor and educational laws

should take place in our country. Due to the implementation of vocational standards, the workers should not lose any social benefits that are owned to them by their positions [14].

Separately, it should be said about the vocational education system. The concise and clear description of specific labor functions in the vocational standards can play a low-down trick with educational standards. The current law "On Education in the Russian Federation" unequivocally states that the result of any vocational education or training is the qualification, and educational standards are prepared on the basis of vocational ones. The paradox, but the law states nothing about such important results of education as the erudition and social training of a person. It is only about qualifications. This interpretation introduces the danger of reducing education to learning [17]. The developing and educating tasks are traditionally not posed before the vocational training, and it is perceived as a tool to develop the specific skills and competences. The vocational education, especially secondary vocational education, with a literal reading of the standards may turn from education into a somewhat extended training. There is a danger that the knowledge and skills, which ensure the development of the individual, create a platform for continuing education will be emasculated from the content of education.

V. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The transparency of the trajectories of preparation for skilled work, the objectivity of qualification evaluation procedures, the ability to compare qualification levels, the possibility of labor contracts individualization ("effective contracts") are beneficial to any employee. This is already a proven way to increase the labor productivity and adequate work results to its payment system.

For HR departments and employers, in determining the qualifications and professional requirements for jobseekers and employees, such vocational standards are the guidelines and can be applied in the part of job titles, professions and occupations, definition of employment functions and requirements for education and work experience, taking into account the peculiarities caused by the production and labor technology and organization of this employer.

As a tool for developing the means of independent qualification evaluation, the vocational standards are still applicable only for those areas of professional activities that do not provide for the legally specific forms of employee certification. Thus, the education and science fall into the number of exceptions, since in this field there are its own systems for pedagogical and scientific workers certification [11].

But it should be noted that the education system was one of the first to respond to changes in the National System of Qualifications. The concept of vocational standards has appeared in the Law "On Education in the Russian Federation" de jure even before they have appeared de facto.

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