



Employment of graduates of higher education institutions: problems, factors and opportunities

Iroda BAKIYEVA¹, Dilafruz ISKANDAROVA²

Tashkent State University of Economics

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ABSTRACT

The article studies the problems of employment of university graduates in their specialty as well as makes proposals to improve the system of graduates' employment by identifying the reasons for their occurrence and deterrents to the employment of graduates.

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Oliy ta'lim muassasalari bitiruvchilarini ishga joylashtirish: muammolar, omillar va imkoniyatlar

ANNOTATSIYA

Kalit so'zlar:

yosh mutaxassislar,
mehnat bozori,
bandlik,
ishsizlik,
ish joyi

Maqolada oliy o'quv yurtlari bitiruvchilarini o'z mutaxassisligi bo'yicha ishga joylashtirish muammolari o'rganilib, ularning paydo bo'lish sabablari va bitiruvchilarni ishga joylashtirishga to'sqinlik qiluvchi omillarni aniqlash orqali bitiruvchilarni ish bilan ta'minlash tizimini takomillashtirish bo'yicha takliflar berilgan.

¹ Associate Professor, Human Resources Management Department, Tashkent State University of Economics. E-mail: i.bakiyeva@tsue.uz

² Basic Doctoral Student, Assistant, Human Resources Management Department, Tashkent State University of Economics. E-mail: d.iskandarova@tsue.uz

Трудоустройство выпускников вузов: проблемы, факторы и возможности

АННОТАЦИЯ

Ключевые слова:

молодые специалисты,
рынок труда,
занятость,
безработица,
рабочее место.

В статье рассматриваются проблемы трудоустройства выпускников вузов по специальности. Авторы предлагают пути улучшения системы трудоустройства, основываясь на анализе причин этих проблем и факторов, затрудняющих процесс трудоустройства выпускников.

INTRODUCTION

Innovative development processes carried out in the economy of the republic affect the situation in the labor market, especially the employment of young people who enter it for the first time in their professions or their interests. In Uzbekistan, more than 600,000 young people enter the labor market every year, making it an increasingly urgent task to support employment, create new jobs, and train professional and highly educated personnel based on international standards.

In the development strategy of Uzbekistan for 2022–2026 and the state program for its implementation in 2022 – "The year of human dignity and active neighborhood", the issues of human capital development and fair social policy are defined as priority tasks. In particular, the development of the education sector is emphasized in the main goals set in the fourth priority task of the development strategy [1]. In this regard, in the development of the higher education sector, the assessment of the quality of education in our country should be adapted to international standards, the process of training highly qualified personnel with modern knowledge and high spiritual and moral qualities, who think independently will be raised to a new level in terms of quality, and the creation of effective mechanisms for the implementation of innovative scientific achievements. implementation of comprehensive work on increasing the scientific potential of educational institutions has been started. In particular, the adoption of the new version of the Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan "On Education", the approval of the Decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan of October 8, 2019 "On approval of the concept of the development of the higher education system of the Republic of Uzbekistan until 2030" No. PF-5847 is a clear proof of this.

Despite the large-scale reforms carried out, the majority of young people who have graduated from secondary and special educational organizations try to continue their studies in higher educational institutions, regardless of the professional field they will occupy in the future. As a result, there is a lack of jobs for young professionals in their professions, their proposed salary, and several reasons, such as dissatisfaction with working conditions, incompatibility of professional training with the requirements set by employers, make the problem of employment of highly educated young professionals in the labor market extremely urgent.

The research within the scope of the studied topic covers the issues of ensuring the employment of young people who graduate from higher education institutions in the labor market, and the main opportunities and obstacles in the employment of young professionals are studied.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The theoretical foundations of employment provision are sufficiently reflected in the works of famous representatives of economics, D. Keynes, A. Marshall, D. Mill, D. Ricardo, A. Smith, M. Friedman, and F. Hayek.

However, today, not the theoretical foundations of employment, but certain problems of ensuring the employment of young professionals remain one of the tasks that are required to be solved in the conditions of Uzbekistan. In this regard, the problems of ensuring the employment of graduates with higher education, effective employment, and increasing the competitiveness of young people in the labor market K.Kh. Abdurahmonov [2], Z.Ya. Khudoyberdiev [3], N.Q. Zokirova [4], G.Q. Abdurakhmonova [5], D.A. Nasimov [6], Z.M. Zikriyev [7], S.B. Goyibnazarov [8], L.M. Ashurzoda [9] and others.

According to K.Kh. Abdurahmanov [2], the socio-economic tasks of young people are determined by their role in the formation of the labor potential of the country. The number of young people entering the labor market and applying to employment assistance centers depends on the number of vacancies. That is, the number of young people working in this field will increase if there is more unemployment in the field.

As an important way to regulate the level of unemployment among young people, it is emphasized that it can be achieved by increasing the number of people who receive education in the absence of production, and by improving social assistance to their families about young women with children of small and preschool age [2]. During the conducted research, it was shown that vocational training of young people, whether or not they are separated from work, does not reduce their desire to be engaged in work and to have a permanent labor income. In this regard, the issues of ensuring youth employment, increasing youth competitiveness, and creating decent jobs to reduce unemployment are also reflected in the work of a group of other scientists [4].

Economists D. Nasimov and Z. Zikriyev [6] consider the labor market category of specialists and point out that there is little attention paid to young professionals, that is, young people who have graduated from a higher education institution, have professional knowledge, but cannot compete in the labor market. In their research, they pay special attention to the category of higher education graduates – young professionals. Because, on the one hand, graduates of higher educational institutions form the labor market of experts, on the other hand, young people form the basis of the labor market and are naturally influenced by their traditions.

Given the lack of sufficient skills for entrepreneurship and employment among young people, Z.Ya. Khudoyberdiev together with a group of authors published a training manual entitled "Fundamentals of Entrepreneurship and Employment Technology". According to the authors, the low level of behavioral skills negatively affects the employment of young future specialists in the labor market, and in turn, the unemployment rate of young people increases [3].

Thus, today many scientists and experts study the issue of employment of graduates, the main purpose of their study is to reduce the unemployment rate in this segment. One of the ways to increase the level of employment of young professionals is to identify the factors that can have a direct impact on it, and this is achieved through the formation and subsequent analysis of the process of regulating the employment of graduates of higher education institutions.

As a result of the research, it was determined that the employment of graduates of higher education institutions depends on the demand and supply in the labor market, the correct conduct of career guidance, the quality of training of future young professionals in higher education institutions, and the effectiveness of employment assistance services.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

When studying graduate employment problems, it is necessary to assess the factors affecting the current situation. According to foreign experiences, the employment of young graduates depends on economic, social, institutional, financial and several other factors. We can see research work on these types of factors in enough published scientific articles. All approaches were conditionally divided into two groups. The first group of views is based on general ideas, mainly due to the presence of socio-economic conditions in the country for young people, that is, the situation in the labor market, the creation of new jobs for young people, the development of the infrastructure of the labor market, the availability of financial resources and other similar factors. The second group of factors has information about the quality of education, the correct orientation of young people to the profession, and the vacancies of young people.

In our research, we focus on the following relationships:

- correct orientation of students to the choice of profession and competitiveness of graduates in the labor market according to the acquired profession;
- development of services provided for employment of graduates of higher educational institutions. Improving public and private employment services will have an effective impact on graduate employability.

In order to verify our previously advanced hypothesis, our research used a systematic approach to data analysis, quantitative and statistical comparison, sociological survey, and abstract-logical cognitive methods.

Statistical data were obtained from international and national official electronic statistical sites, the Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Innovation of the Republic of Uzbekistan and the Ministry of Employment and Labor Relations of the Republic of Uzbekistan.

ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

In Uzbekistan, the government is paying a great attention to the development of the education system, including higher education. In particular, the number of higher education institutions in 2021–2022 is 154 and has increased by 2.4 times compared to the 2011/2012 academic year. The number of students studying in them is increasing year by year, for example, in the 2011–2012 academic year, there were 86 students per 10,000 inhabitants, and in the last academic year, their number was 229 students. Is this too much or too little for a republic with a population of 35 million? How to solve the problem of the increasing number of students graduating from educational institutions and getting a job in the future? According to the data of the Interstate Statistical Committee of the CIS countries, the number of students per 10,000 inhabitants in 2020 in Kazakhstan is 305, in Russia 277, in Belarus 282, in Armenia 269, in neighboring Tajikistan 261 [11].

Judging from the given information, there is a sufficient need for higher education in Uzbekistan (Table 1).

Table 1

Data about graduates of higher educational institutions of the Republic of Uzbekistan*

Indicators	Academic years					
	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021
Total	62461	65223	67546	69802	72424	108241
Of them:						
Undergraduate level	57449	60077	64114	63865	66643	98177
Employment rate, %	90,1	85,6	81,3	77,2	78,7	
Master's degree	5012	5146	3432	5937	5781	10064
Employment rate, %	90,3	85,3	82,3	79,1	81,6	

**Note: the indicator of employment of graduates refers to the monitoring year*

Source: compiled by the author based on the information of the Ministry of higher education, science and innovation of the Republic of Uzbekistan

We will conduct an econometric analysis based on the data collected on the number of graduates of higher education institutions and their level of employment in 2015-2021, firstly, we calculate the variation width, average, mean linear difference, variance, mean squared difference values of the statistical set collected using the following formulas:

$$R = x_{\max} - x_{\min}, \quad \bar{X} = \frac{1}{n} \sum_{i=1}^n X_i, \quad \rho = \frac{\sum |x - \bar{x}|}{f}, \quad \sigma^2 = \frac{\sum (x - \bar{x})^2}{f}, \quad \sigma = \sqrt{\frac{\sum (x - \bar{x})^2}{f}}$$

For undergraduate graduates, $R=40728$; $\bar{X}=68387,5$; $\rho=9929,8$; $\sigma^2=183575345$; $\sigma=13548,9$

For graduates of master's degree, $R=6632$; $\bar{X}=5895$; $\rho=1403$; $\sigma^2=4133730$; $\sigma=2033,2$

So, over the last 5 years, the number of undergraduate graduates and graduates of master's degree has increased to 40,728 and 6,632, respectively.

The average number of graduates on the bachelor's level is 68,387, and the indicators for the years differ from the average value by 9,929.8 units. Graduates of the master's degree make up an average of 5895, which differs from it by an average of 1403 units.

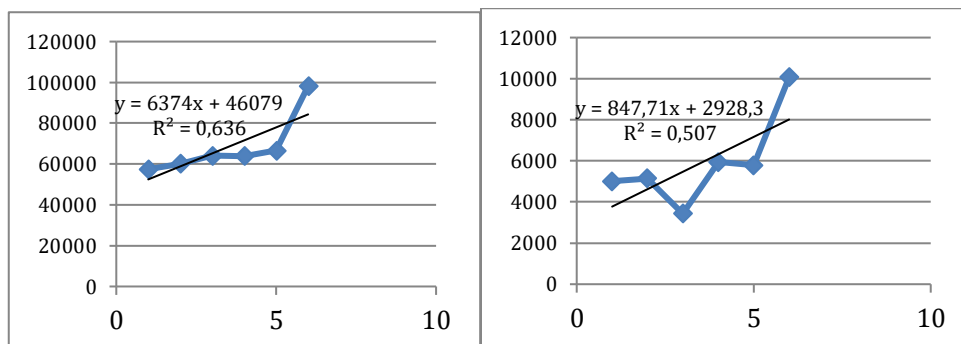
During the considered period, the number of bachelor's and master's graduates in the republic increased by 73.3 percent. Among them, 70.8% of bachelor's graduates, the number of master's graduates has doubled.

If we observe their employment status, we can see the opposite trend, that is, the employment rate of graduates has decreased. This applies equally to undergraduate and master's graduates.

Based on the data in the above table, we will create a regression equation to perform an econometric analysis, according to which we will get the change of the Y-resulting factor and X-influencing factor under the influence of the time factor. In this case, we assume that the relationship between y and x is straight line ($y=a_0+bx$). The straight-line regression equation takes the following form:

$$y = 6374x + 46079; y = 847,71x + 2928,3$$

According to this equation, as a result of the change of the influencing factor-time factor by one unit, the number of graduates of the bachelor's degree increases by 6374 units and the number of graduates of the master's degree increases by 848 units.



Discussion of research outcomes

Today, one of the most complex problems in the field is the problem of planning the scope and profiles of professional education based on the requirements of the labor market and social order. In addition to fundamental knowledge, it is becoming necessary for students to acquire soft skills such as critical thinking, communication and communication, self-presentation, teamwork, and flexibility necessary for their professional activities. In this regard, a new stage of reforming the education system has begun in Uzbekistan, and great importance is attached to the quality of training of highly qualified specialists.

According to some economists, the influence of various factors on the employment of students of higher education institutions has become a law today [10], and during our research, as a result of studying the influence of various factors on the choice of work of students in their specialty, it was found that there are some differences (Table 2). The monitoring of the employment of graduates of the Tashkent State University of Economics in the 2020-2021 academic year was conducted to achieve the most reliable results, the activities of the university structures that help to support graduates and ensure student employment were analyzed, and a sociological survey was conducted among 145 graduates who chose a job in their specialty.

The general share of the factors in the formation of the motivation to employ each of the participants of the educational process in their specialty and the share of the influence of the factors determined as a result of the sociological survey are comparatively presented in Table 2.

In foreign educational institutions, students' employment at the higher education stage (85%) is achieved through scientific seminars, meetings with leading experts and employers, internships, external evaluation and self-evaluation. Based on the results of the survey, it was found that there is a significant difference in the influence of factors.

Table 2

The influence rate of various factors on the choice of work of graduates in their specialty

Basic steps	The general state of the level of influence of factors*	The level of influence of the factors identified as a result of the survey
Pre-tertiary stage (parents, friends, school, high school, college)	5 %	24 %
Higher education stage (deanship, departments, tutors)	52 %	16 %
Higher education stage (qualification practices)	20 %	25 %
Higher education stage (marketing department, meeting with employers)	10 %	7 %
Employers, the situation in the labor market	13 %	28 %

Source: Based on the results of a sociological survey conducted by the author

In particular, the influence of the stage of higher education on the job choices of Uzbek students made 58 percent. It was found that parents, acquaintances, and friends have more influence on students' choice of profession, and they choose their future profession as a result of studying the situation in the labor market after obtaining higher education and self-evaluation after meetings with employers.

While studying at a higher educational institution, students get to know the various directions of their faculty's activities and participate in various activities. By communicating with professors, students get an idea of the possibilities of the Higher Education Institution and their future specialization.

In the higher education institutions of the Republic of Uzbekistan, in contrast to foreign higher education institutions, the activity of employment centers has not been sufficiently established until recently, and marketing departments in higher education institutions do not work with potential employers, which has caused problems in the employment of graduates in their professions. During the employment process, students are asked to search for a job, write a resume, lack of work experience, dissatisfaction with the offered salary, etc. To eliminate these obstacles and improve the process of employing students, it would be appropriate to establish a "Career Center" in higher education institutions. However, such centers have not been established in all higher education institutions of the republic. In such a case, the "Marketing" department of the Higher Education Institution must undertake the tasks of ensuring the employment of students. Until now, in practice, it has been observed that tasks related to the employment of students in marketing departments are carried out only on "paper".

At the same time, it has become a tradition to hold "Career days" for the students of the graduate course in the HEIs of the Republic every year, to which potential employers are invited. Guests invited to the event will inform and advise graduates about vacancies in the field of study, the field of the study, and demand for specialists in a certain field in the labor market, and invite those who have expressed a desire to work in the field to an initial interview. Nevertheless, this type of event was held 1 or 2 times during the academic year, which limited the opportunities for students to get a job at the stage of higher education.

If we are talking about career centers, foreign experiences of studying the activities of such centers have been sufficiently formed. To date, in the existing foreign educational institutions in Uzbekistan, such centers have already taken place in the organizational structure of HEIs. Career centers are a relatively new concept for public educational institutions of the republic, among others, the opening of the Career Center at the Tashkent State University of Economics can be associated with the transition of the university to the credit-module system.

The career center organizes short-term training courses for students based on cooperation with local and international employing companies, regularly involves industry experts in the training process, creates a database of companies' requirements for new employees, and directly organizes training and work experience for students.

However, no higher education institution in the republic can guarantee 100% employment of its graduates. This issue is especially complicated in HEIs, which graduate many thousands of students per year, and it is impossible to provide all graduates with a job in their specialty.

Of course, when planning the training of highly educated personnel, it is necessary to study the labor market and determine the need for personnel being trained in an educational institution. The labor market is changing, and the demand for personnel in one or another field is significantly influenced by the social, economic, and political situation in the country. For example, during the pandemic, the state's need for medical personnel increased, and the issue of the need for higher education for school teachers in the republic is being raised. Naturally, the need for personnel in the medical and pedagogic fields is increasing several times, and the state assists in the employment of graduates in this field.

By itself, "What about graduates of other fields?" – the question arises. Finding a job is also the task of the graduates themselves. They should see their future and choose a specialty that will be in demand. There is an internationally recognized indicator of "student employment within the first six months after graduation", which is mainly done by the students themselves.

According to the opinion of students who participated in a sociological survey conducted at the Tashkent State University of Economics, there are several problems in the employment of graduates, and the following are among the most frequently repeated problems in the survey:

- insufficient information about vacancies;
- insufficient awareness of graduates about job vacancies and appropriate methods of finding work;
- unattractiveness of the offered jobs (low wages, unsatisfactory working conditions, etc.);
- insufficient work experience of young professionals.

The problem of access to information and its openness in the employment of requirements has not been sufficiently resolved. Vacancies offered should be open to all, which will gradually and significantly reduce bureaucracy in recruitment. At the same time, there is a need to hold meetings with potential employers in several directions aimed at finding a job for graduates at the level of HEIs.

The structure of the graduate employment regulation process structurally assumes the existence of its main blocks – the state, university, students and graduates, business communities (enterprises, public organizations, and associations), public and private employment assistance services, and labor market monitoring.

It should be noted that each bloc is a group united by its own interests and socio-economic status. In the process of regulating the employment of graduates, using a set of basic tools, the university is the basis for the implementation of graduate employment promotion programs.

Among the important and necessary blocks of the employment regulation process, it is worth noting the Centers for Assistance to Population Employment, private employment agencies, and employment sites. Graduates looking for work often use such methods. Employment assistance centers have a large database of job vacancies with aggregated resumes of applicants from various organizations and enterprises. The main goal of the centers is to reduce unemployment. In addition to the above, these centers are engaged in the study of the demand and supply of labor in the labor market, in the future this information can be provided to state and non-state structures upon request. Taking into account the high level of youth unemployment in the republic, in our opinion, it would be appropriate to connect the activities of such centers with the career centers of higher education institutions. Figure 1 shows the scheme of employment assistance centers of the state with young professionals.

Accounts of unemployed citizens are kept and unemployment allowances are paid within the framework of the activities of regional employment assistance centers. Among the main tasks of the center is to provide free assistance in the selection of vacant jobs, assistance in finding a job, training for a new profession or training, if necessary, participation in paid community work, temporary employment, payment of benefits and legal assistance in all matters of labor law. It is worth noting the possibility of providing preferential loans to those who want to be employed and the unemployed.

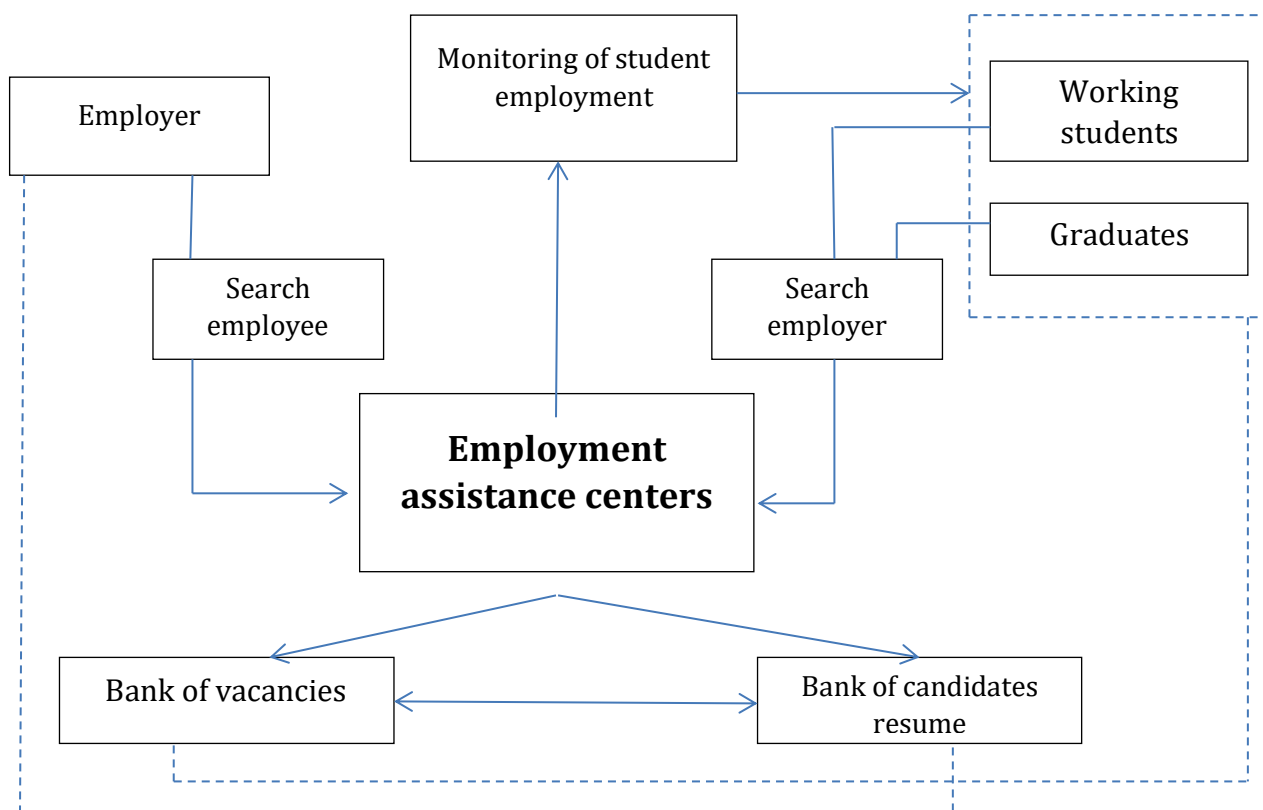


Figure 1. Scheme of activities of Centers for Employment Assistance for the Employment of Students and Graduates of Higher Education Institutions

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Since the end of the 1990s, a new institution – private employment agencies (staffing agencies) – began to form in Uzbekistan, but their activities were only regulated by the Law "On Private Employment Agencies" of the Republic of Uzbekistan (URQ-501 dated 10.16.2018) only by 2018. It became legal only when it was accepted.

Today, private employment agencies play a big role in finding a place in the labor market and providing the population with decent jobs. In our current legislation, the obligations of private employment agencies to job seekers are not fully established or strict procedures are not established, which has caused a number of problematic situations in practice. At the same time, the fact that the current law does not set a clear limit on the amount of fees paid by private employment agencies for information and consulting services provided to citizens in the field of employment caused them to set different amounts for the provision of services of this type. Also, factors such as the lack of a transparent mechanism for registering service contracts by private employment agencies and monitoring their implementation hurt obtaining and analyzing accurate and truthful information about their activities. Nevertheless, with the adoption of the new law, about 30 private employment agencies were established, as of March 2022, a total of 114 such agencies were licensed in the republic [12], and by this time the new law "On Private Employment Agencies" was approved (URQ dated 13.08.2020 – No. 632).

When talking about private employment agencies, it should be noted that these agencies mainly conduct activities related to the employment of Uzbek citizens abroad, and their role in the employment of students and graduates of higher education institutions of our republic in their specialties is not very significant. At the same time, there are some private HR consulting firms, which, along with consulting services, are also engaged in the employment of qualified personnel in the domestic labor market. However, since their activities are multifaceted and come from students of employers, they are not very noticeable in the employment of young graduates.

We should also highlight online sites, which are one of the ways students can get a job in the job search process. Employment sites allow job seekers not only to register and view job vacancies, but they regularly conduct online surveys and post research results. Among the advantages of this method, the following can be distinguished: efficiency, convenience, saving time and money, confidentiality, free access to the database of vacancies, and the possibility of candidates sending resumes to many vacancies. Disadvantages include the high demands of students and graduates, and the publication of a limited number of vacancies in the field of activity. According to statistics, 5-10 percent of job seekers get a job through job sites.

Each of the sites focuses on recruiting job seekers with varying degrees of effectiveness. The specifics of their activities differ slightly, mainly in terms of the various means of support, as well as the level and quality of the vacancies offered.

Analyzing the work schemes of employment assistance centers, private employment agencies, and employment sites, we can say that all of them act as intermediaries between the employee and the employer, excluding their direct communication, and take full responsibility for finding the necessary specialist or vacancy. This greatly limits the job applicant's ability to find a suitable job, and the employer's ability to find highly qualified personnel. In such a situation, it is more effective for these organizations to conduct mediation activities only at the initial stage and give more choices to their clients.

CONCLUSION

The results of the analysis of the factors affecting the employment of graduates of higher education institutions in the republic and the available opportunities show the need to modernize the system of ensuring the employment of graduates, because the level of influence of the existing system is not sufficient and it should be strengthened, in particular:

- introducing into the educational process career orientation and motivational aspects, feedback mechanisms, and mechanisms for encouraging active participants in the process of career advancement of the future specialist;
- improvement by allocating areas of responsibility to each of the participants of the graduate employment support system;
- organization of meetings by inviting people with high success in this field to the educational process so that they can imagine their profession in a positive light in the future;
- carrying out the selection of talented students with the HR representatives of large employing companies and providing information about the results on sites of HEI and social networks.

Thus, a clear mechanism of interaction between the student, the employer, and various structures of higher education institutions will be developed with the improvement of the system of assistance to the employment of graduate students. This, in turn, allows solving the issue of employment of graduates in their specialty more effectively, as well as the successful advancement of graduates on the career ladder.

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