



Overview of the problems of VET education: an Attempt for Classification and Cross-Mapping the Problems from 2024: A Case study

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ABSTRACT: This study systematically examines the multifaceted challenges facing vocational education and training (VET) in Bulgaria, highlighting the persistent issues that undermine the effectiveness of the system. Through a comprehensive classification of these challenges, the research identifies key areas such as inadequate funding, outdated curricula, insufficient industry linkages, and a lack of qualified teaching personnel. The analysis reveals that long-term neglect, frequent political shifts, and ineffective policy measures have contributed to a significant skills gap among graduates compared to their predecessors. It summons cores of the multi-layered long-standing problems in Vocational education in Bulgaria. Long-term neglect, frequent changes in the views of various political entities with a strong influence on vocational education, inadequate malapropos and untimely fragmented half-measures, as well as the lack of the participation of serious business and expertise in vocational education are among the many reasons for the low level of technical and professional skills of the modern graduate of a vocational high school compared to his predecessor from the time of Polytechnicism. The absence of a cohesive framework for cooperation between educational institutions and industry stakeholders exacerbates the disconnect between VET programs and labor market needs. The paper also aims to provide a structured overview of the current state of VET in Bulgaria, offering insights that can inform future policy development and strategic interventions.

KEY WORDS: Classification, Problems, Vocational Education.

INTRODUCTION

The VET system must be built on the understanding that VET is not only an educational process, but above all an economic, social, financial, stability factor and national priority. However, VET exists because of Bulgarian industry and business and provides human capital. This would require the creation of relevant new structures as well as the unification and facilitation of the various participants in VET (for example, the creation of an autonomous body for external quality assessment and validation of acquired professional competences in VET).

Vocational education faces numerous challenges globally. These include inadequate infrastructure, lack of qualified teachers, and outdated curricula (Ceyda Akallı et al., 2022; Okan Sarigoz, 2022). Students often struggle with work discipline and adapting to practical training (Okan Sarigoz, 2022). The COVID-19 pandemic and geopolitical issues have further complicated vocational education delivery (Kovalchuk et al., 2022). To address these problems, experts suggest improving teacher qualifications, enhancing material and technical resources, and updating educational programs (Dardiri et al., 2023). Strengthening the education-employment-production relationship and offering international internships are also recommended. In India, vocational education faces additional challenges, including a lack of social prestige and inadequate integration with the formal academic system (Deepak Chakravarty et al., 2020). Improving infrastructure, sensitizing students and parents about the benefits of skill education and enhancing industry linkages are crucial for addressing these issues (Azman et al., 2020). Many VET textbooks are outdated, failing to reflect current industry trends and labor market needs (Lyesnikova et al., 2023). This issue is compounded by inadequate teaching facilities and equipment (Toroka & Kafanabo, 2024). Teachers perceive that some VET curricula, such as civil engineering programs, do not provide sufficient skills for the labor market and require urgent revision (Nkwanyane et al., 2020). These issues can significantly affect the effectiveness of VET programs in preparing people for the workforce.

The general, oft-cited and well-known problems from the past and relevant today are:

- ✓ Lack of funding
- ✓ Outdated curricula and material base (Kovalchuk et al., 2022)



- ✓ Insufficient and/or ineffective linkages with industry (Rosina et al., 2021)
- ✓ Inadequate training for teachers, lack of reliable update programs [1]
- ✓ Limited access and inclusion (Maurer et al., 2022; Scharnhorst & Kammermann, 2020).
- ✓ Long-standing problems with the reputation and prestige of VET, discipline and education (Stefanova 2005:110)
- ✓ Lack of recognition and certification, lack of credit system (Maurer, 2021)
- ✓ Inadequate direction and career development (Magee et al., 2021)
- ✓ Insufficient data and research
- ✓ Policy and governance issues (Clarke et al., 2020)
- ✓ Poor coverage of rapid technological changes (Havreberg & Sylte, 2020)
- ✓ Lack of effective entrepreneurship and sustainability training
- ✓ Lack of synchronization and adequate response to economic fluctuations and changing labor market requirements (Emmenegger & Seitzl, 2020) [2]
- ✓ Concern for the environment and sustainability (Ramsarup et al., 2024; Kibrit et al., 2022).
- ✓ Gender inequality (Sevilla & Carvajal, 2020; Lyesnikova, 2022; Bridges et al., 2022)
- ✓ Drastic discrepancies between theory and practice (Stalder & Weich, 2021; Schneider et al., 2022; Gregson & Gregson, 2024).
- ✓ Regional differences

Addressing these challenges requires a coordinated effort by governments, educational institutions, industries and other stakeholders to ensure that TVET systems are responsive, inclusive and responsive to the evolving needs of the workforce.

According to a new study by the Institute for Market Economy [3] , which examines *the index of correspondence between professional education and the profile of the economy for 2024* , the analyzes show extremely negative trends regarding:

- ✓ " continuation of training in specialties that are not in demand at all on the labor market"
- ✓ lacks any professional orientation,
- ✓ lack of flexibility in study subjects,
- ✓ the state gives money for VET, but there is no return, the percentage of people starting work in a profession for which they are trained is no more than 20%.
- ✓ weak practical skills of graduates.

The research concluded that almost half of the students will not work what they studied for; as well as a huge discrepancy with the objectives of VET as well as a completely negative trend in the long term, showing the ineffectiveness of VET in general.

Various informal organizations in their reports propose versatile measures in different formats to strengthen the state of VET [4];[5];[6].

There are also problems with dual education [7] , as well as the reduction of secondary specialists, dictated by the worsening demographic situation. It is reported, "the quality of education in many vocational schools is declining, at the same time vocational education is often associated with unprestigious and low-paid work [8].

CLASSIFICATION AND SYSTEMATIZATION OF PROBLEMS. The BULGARIAN CASE

The problems of secondary vocational education can be divided according to different criteria, levels and scales of scope. In the article, they are divided and ten core issues are presented, with the conceptual context composing it listed under each one.

I. ORGANIZATIONAL AND MANAGEMENT PROBLEMS

- Limited application of the modular organization of VET, which will be imposed as a future mass organizational form of education.
- Lack of State funding for the payment of the work of students in a dual form of VET, or at least partial funding of excellent students/employers when results are achieved. Government funding policies can be indirect, such as VAT exemptions for training costs under the VAT Act, other financial exemptions and financial support to reward trainees.



- Lack of flexible curricula and forms of training that allow to take into account the individual needs of the trainees, or give you consistent training in a part of the profession through modular programs.
- Adequate distribution of material resources between schools when closing classes with a well-developed material base and proven training capacity.
- In the above-mentioned problems, the role and participation in the coordination of study plans, study content, forms of training as well as the management of VET processes by the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy is superficial and apparent . **In fact, the Ministry of Education and Culture hardly participates in the implementation of state policy and management of VET.**
- A huge problem is the lack of regulations for the coordination and role of **employers** in the management of VET, this lack of regulations is not accidental but purposefully limits the role of the representatives of employer organizations who are closer to the real problems and can more specifically solve some of the these problems. The limited role is based on my limited presence in NAPEO - two of the four nationally representative employer organizations, and almost no permanent representation in the implementation of VET policies in the MES. The role of employers' organizations in deciding the state admissions plan is quite vague and limited, and this is the sixth case where employers want training in professions that are not part of the established list of professions or they wish to receive qualified personnel within short periods of the year or two, which does not correspond with the training according to the relevant developed outdated and inflexible framework programs.
- Extremely unregulated, even dismissive attitude to participation in *non-formal vocational training (NFVET)* the representation of vocational training centers in the management of the VET system, dominated by the Ministry of Education and Culture as the center of management. This is a prerequisite and there is a potential opportunity for party staffing in the system, promotion of party interests and indirect political "showdown" with certain branches of business, respectively illogical promotion and support of others, lack of transparency when making management decisions for the system. In order to increase the quality, competitiveness and efficiency of the system, decentralization from the Ministry of Education and Culture and giving greater representation, quantitative and qualitative, will play a role in the selection of curricula, programs, content of the employers' organizations of the local authorities by region and business.

II. PROBLEMS BASED ON INADEQUATE CONNECTION BETWEEN VOCATIONAL SCHOOLS AND INDUSTRY/ BUSINESS

- Vocational schools in the secondary education system in Bulgaria are the place for less ambitious children who do not demonstrate a clear desire for career development after graduation. If the goal of graduates from humanitarian high schools is higher education at any cost, 100% of students from vocational high schools is many times smaller. This is due to the well-known and proven statement of employers, educational experts and businesses, that vocational education allows trainees to pass through the institution without equipping them with real knowledge, skills and competences adequate for the labor market, thereby producing non-competitive graduates .
- Partial and unorganized national-level weaknesses of a long-standing nature, such as insufficient or unupdated teacher qualifications in the VET system; *outdated material base* ; insufficient flexibility of the system in relation to rapid changes in practice; the lack of a close connection between vocational high school and business; insufficient practical training; non-regulated and non-systematic participation of business in the processes of education and practically on the face of it is its exclusion.
- Insufficient participation of employers in the validation of the competences of those who have acquired a professional qualification in VET institutions.
- Lack of periodic **National Economic Analysis** of medium-term trends of "avoidance" of students from Vocational high schools from various professional fields and specific professions, especially profiles related to industry - locksmith, woodworker, turner, electrician, welder, mechanic, electrician and others; on the basis of such an analysis, a system should be implemented for medium-term and long-term forecasting of the needs of qualifications at the regional and sectoral level, and this should be linked to the state plan for admission to vocational high schools.



III. PROBLEMS DUE TO LACK OF HORIZONTAL VERTICAL CONDUCTIVITY (LEGAL)

- The lack of a professional credit system model and a plan for its approval and impact assessment, which hinders the vertical mobility of the VET system - recognition of credits acquired under certain agreed conditions of a lower educational system by the institution at a higher level. The system for the introduction of credits in VET (ECVET) [9] **has not been developed and implemented** in accordance with the implementation of the European Recommendation at the national level, nor has the framework for the implementation of the credit transfer system been created and approved, this leads to difficulties and the impossibility of easy and adequate recognition and legitimization of diplomas of professional qualifications of Bulgarian citizens in European enterprises and businesses.
- There is no system for validating knowledge, skills and competences acquired through informal and independent learning (*APL system*). Such a system can be part of a national system of education and training providing diverse paths for learning thus stimulating participation in all forms of learning formal education and training informal learning normally independently. The common phenomenon of a worker working in the profession without a qualification in it has many times more knowledge than a graduate with a professional qualification with zero practical experience; the system **does not** seem to reflect this phenomenon, and does not allow it to be removed.
- There is a complete lack of a model in VET after secondary education and in higher education for acquiring the fourth and fifth qualification degrees and elements/degrees of the OKS bachelor; compared to countries like Germany, Austria, etc., this hinders the way to validate knowledge and give credits to people with good practical experience in order to quickly pass and validate in higher education, which allows for more efficient horizontal and vertical conduction.

IV. POOR, OUTDATED AND INADEQUATE CONTENT OF POO

- The two-decade-discussed topic of VET curricula, which to this day lack their own procedures and criteria for self-evaluation, nor procedures for a mandatory requirement for the engagement of expert representatives/employers from the profession, thus an assessment of the quality of VET is concluded to a partial formal process depending on the school organization of the educational institution.
- Lack of flexibility in choosing educational content in its part of *special school preparation*, caused by static state educational standards, without a mechanism for their updating.
- Congested and unbalanced curricula, chaotic and divergent learning content, a large volume of learning material with an inconsistent and small horary.
- Lack of individual research activity in the field of the profession studied in a VET institution (*Milkov 2016 :20*); this is correlated with the lack of modularity and project-based learning as a basic form of professional-specific and industry-specific VET training.
- Progressive lagging of practical training from the dynamics of technological development and modernization of enterprises in some sectors of the economy.
- Weakly organized and not adequate practice - common formalism in the implementation, absurd practice outside the working environment, low level of the quality of professional training in high-tech professions.

V. INEFFECTIVE PLAN - ADMISSION AND UNOPTIMIZED SCHOOL NETWORK

- The state **admission plan** is not updated on the basis of a study of the VET needs of the individual regional economies, but serves the aspiration of vocational high schools and schools to fill their classes. In this way, conditions are created for unregulated competition between different types of schools, where the natural consequences are the quality of the high schools themselves and from there the imbalances between students in Vocational high schools and language high schools and the creation of a feeling of low efficiency and unattractiveness of VET.
- Schools “*compete to recruit and retain students by lowering their standards*” (*Gospodinov 2015*).

VI. MISSING STATE POLICY FOR VET

- Lack of a unified national strategy for the development of educational policies in vocational education synchronized with industrial branches (*Lyubenova & Lyubenov 2019*)



- There are no mechanisms to ensure the quality of VET. According to a 2011 analysis by the British Council, it was reported that there is not even a legal regulation for the quality of VET; such has not been made since. Ordinance number 16 of 8. XII .2016 [10], which defines the state educational standard for quality management in the system of schools in the country, does not have a single order for the specifics of training and quality management, especially for VET!
- Lack of specific policies in the field of professional counseling and guidance.

VII.M ODERNIZATION AND ELECTRONIC SYSTEMS

- The lack of a professional credit system model and a plan for its approval and impact assessment, which hinders the vertical mobility of the VET system - recognition of credits acquired under certain agreed conditions of a lower educational system by the institution at a higher level. The system for introducing credits in VET (ECVET) has not been developed and implemented in accordance with the implementation of a European recommendation at the national level, nor has the framework for the implementation of the credit transfer system been created and approved, this leads to difficulties and the impossibility of easily and adequate recognition and legitimization of diplomas from professional qualifications of Bulgarian citizens in European enterprises and business.
- Absence of a system external to VET to implement **the functions**:
 1. Independent external assessment of the learning environment and the effectiveness of the school institution part of VET
 2. Independent assessment of the quality of VET and compliance with the needs of industrial business practices, for which a system of criteria and indicators must be built.
 3. System for regulation between **inspection** and **self-evaluation** of VET schools. Such a system will indirectly self-regulate the quality of VET within the institution itself. On the basis of the coverage criterion (or criteria of conformity between declared and attested efficiency), financial incentives can be organized for the better institutions and other 33. lack of a regulated framework/system for cooperation between school institutions in the VET system. lack of partnership between schools in organizing internships and practical activities, lack of a personnel exchange system between schools with the same similar professional fields with the participation of specialists and from companies, researchers, teachers in higher education who, under certain conditions, respectively with financial incentives from the state by reducing taxes and additional payments to carry out part of the training in higher technological and specific professions. In this regard, it is good to think about an electronic system in which we have a structured grouping of joint activities
- Until now, there has been no organization in the country for carrying out a study of the needs of professions, the so-called. Employer 's Survey Which serves as an additional reference framework regarding the choice of content and forms in VET.
- *The state educational standard* for acquiring a qualification in a profession based on units of learning results is static and not dynamic. There is no system for more gradual updating, which should be related to the analysis of the above- **mentioned Employer 's Survey** .
- there is a lack of **a unified informational national database** (as required by CEDEFOP [9]) for vocational high school graduates that is available to employers when hiring and in which basic characteristics from the portfolio of each student are given, thus creating a prerequisite the business focusing individually on certain students based on their personal achievements supports such students and will overall benefit their professional orientation and attraction to the Business .
- This National Database system can be made with a dual aspect, that is, students to be informed about the characteristics of the labor market for structure-determining enterprises in the region in which they are and in all other regions, the characteristics of individual professions, the success rate of their classmates from more upper classes and from previous graduates and the role of business in supporting career guidance and transition from study to work.
- Lack of a single system for processing, systematization and structuring according to single criteria for evaluating the quality of the accumulated huge amount of information about the problems in the VET system.

VIII. HR PROBLEMS - PEDAGOGICAL ASPECT

- The much-needed system for regularly refreshing and updating the knowledge about the profession of teachers from the VET system is missing.



- There is no **strategy** to stop the outflow of highly qualified personnel from the teaching profession in the VET system, due to an archaic and ineffective system for horizontal and vertical career development of young teachers in professional training, as well as a lack of the possibility of a higher starting salary for those with higher qualification through the budgets of interested **ministries** prepared on the basis of the economic analysis of medium-term and long-term forecasting as well as **Employer 's Survey** .

IX. FINANCIAL AND ECONOMIC PROBLEMS

- System for regulation between **inspection** and **self-evaluation** of VET schools. Such a system will indirectly self-regulate the quality of VET within the institution itself. On the basis of the coverage criterion (or criteria of conformity between declared and attested efficiency) financial incentives can be organized for the better institutions and so on.
- Lack of VET funding policy, quality basis this is a result due to lack of VET quality system

X. LEGAL PROBLEMS

- Lack of an explicit task of the MES to periodically analyze comprehensive and detailed quality of the system as well as the lack of a control mechanism to initiate and organize the results of these quality analyses. Established in 2016, the VET Directorate at the Ministry of Education and Culture has an executive character with the aim of assisting the Minister in implementing the overall policies for VET, but not a prerogative set/imposed by law to create a strategy for VET, as well as responsibility for strategic management of the department systematic analyzes to increase the quality of the system. In this way, the directorate does not really have specific commitments, rights and obligations to the vocational high schools in terms of direct control and their management, and it only coordinates the management at the top, which makes it quite ineffective and low-performing. Also, her activity does nothing to increase the quality and solving of the huge problems of the VET system.
- At the same time, RUs create curricula and programs, but do not have the capacity to organize the entire process or analyze their quality. Namely, the RUO prepares the state admission plan on the basis of submitted supporting letters for a given profession from the relevant school and not according to the requirements of the labor market! This grotesque policy leads to lobbying and detachment from the real situation on the labor market and is detrimental to the entire system of professional education in Bulgaria. All this leads to a structural lack of accountability of officials , deteriorated quality and efficiency of the system of professional training in our country , although through a " *conducted*" set of indices they manage to reshape and show some positive trends.

Below is a comprehensive **Table 1.** that summarized the the identified problems in the VET system in Bulgaria, along with their descriptions and potential solutions.

Table 1. Detailed overview of the various problems affecting the VET system in Bulgaria.

Problem Category	Description	Potential Solutions
Outdated Curriculum	Curricula do not reflect current industry standards and technological advancements.	Regularly update curricula in collaboration with industry stakeholders to ensure relevance.
Inadequate Funding	Insufficient financial resources limit the ability to invest in modern equipment and facilities.	Increase public funding for VET and encourage private sector investment through incentives.
Lack of Qualified Educators	Shortage of skilled teachers with both academic qualifications and practical industry experience.	Implement professional development programs and offer competitive salaries to attract and retain educators.
Weak Industry Linkages	Insufficient collaboration between vocational schools and businesses leads to a skills mismatch.	Establish partnerships with local businesses to create internship opportunities and co-develop training programs.
Quality Assurance Issues	Lack of a cohesive framework for monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of VET programs.	Develop a robust quality assurance system that includes regular assessments and feedback from employers.



Low Social Prestige	Vocational education is often viewed as less prestigious compared to academic education.	Promote the value of vocational training through awareness campaigns highlighting successful graduates.
Insufficient Practical Training	Limited opportunities for hands-on experience in real-world settings.	Increase the availability of dual education programs that combine classroom learning with practical training.
Demographic Challenges	Declining student enrollment due to demographic shifts and perceptions of vocational education.	Enhance outreach efforts to attract students and parents, emphasizing the benefits of vocational training.
Lack of Flexibility	The VET system is slow to adapt to rapid changes in industry practices and technologies.	Foster a culture of innovation within VET institutions to encourage adaptability and responsiveness.
Ineffective Policy Implementation	Frequent changes in political priorities lead to inconsistent policies affecting VET.	Establish a stable, long-term strategic plan for VET that transcends political cycles and focuses on sustainability.
HR Problems - Pedagogical Aspect	Lack of a system for regular professional development and retention of qualified VET teachers.	Create a structured career development pathway for teachers, including incentives for continuous education.
Financial and Economic Problems	Absence of a regulatory system for self-evaluation and quality assurance in VET institutions.	Implement a self-regulation framework that incentivizes quality improvements within VET schools.
Legal Problems	Lack of clear mandates for quality analysis and control mechanisms within the VET system.	Establish legal frameworks that define responsibilities and accountability for VET management and quality assurance.
Inadequate Connection with Industry	Vocational schools are perceived as institutions for less ambitious students, leading to low enrollment.	Improve the image of vocational education by showcasing successful alumni and their career paths.
Lack of Systematic Participation	Non-regulated and unorganized involvement of businesses in the educational process.	Create formal channels for business participation in curriculum development and training programs.
Insufficient Teacher Qualifications	Many teachers lack updated qualifications and industry experience, affecting education quality.	Mandate regular training and industry exposure for VET teachers to keep their skills current.

Table 2. summarizes the problems in the VET system in Bulgaria offering a comprehensive overview of key problems, their implications, and how they interrelate, which can help stakeholders identify priority areas for intervention. The table facilitates discussion among educators, policymakers, and industry representatives by serving as a useful tool for conversations about potential reforms and solutions. For policymakers and educational leaders, it informs decision-making processes by highlighting critical areas that require attention and resources. The table also serves as a reference point for further research and analysis related to vocational education, helping to identify gaps in existing literature or areas for future study. Educational institutions can utilize the insights from the table to develop strategic plans that address the identified issues, ensuring that their programs align with labor market needs and educational standards.



Table 2. Interconnectedness of these problems implications for the VET system: a summary

Problem Category	Key Issues	Implications
Organizational and Management	Limited application of modular organization; lack of state funding for dual VET.	Inefficient management and coordination of VET programs; reduced student engagement in dual training.
Quality Assurance	Absence of a comprehensive quality assurance system; lack of periodic analysis by the Ministry.	Deterioration in the quality of education; inability to address systemic issues effectively.
Curriculum Development	RUs create curricula without labor market analysis; curricula often outdated.	Mismatch between education and industry needs; graduates lack relevant skills for employment.
Teacher Qualifications	Insufficient training and qualifications of VET teachers; lack of industry experience.	Decreased educational quality; students receive inadequate preparation for the workforce.
Industry Collaboration	Weak ties between vocational schools and businesses; lack of internships and practical training.	Skills gap in the workforce; employers struggle to find qualified candidates.
Social Perception	Vocational education viewed as less prestigious; associated with low-paid jobs.	Decreased enrollment in VET programs; societal undervaluation of skilled trades.
Demographic Challenges	Declining student enrollment due to demographic shifts; negative perceptions of vocational training.	Long-term sustainability issues for VET institutions; potential workforce shortages.
Policy and Regulation	Frequent changes in political priorities affecting VET policies; lack of a stable strategic plan.	Inconsistent implementation of VET reforms; difficulty in achieving long-term goals.
Financial Constraints	Insufficient funding for VET programs; lack of financial incentives for students and employers.	Limited resources for modernizing facilities and equipment; reduced opportunities for students.
Dual Education Challenges	Problems with the implementation of dual education; lack of support for students in dual programs.	Ineffective dual training experiences; students may not gain the necessary practical skills.

CONCLUSION

The analysis of VET in Bulgaria reveals a complex landscape characterized by a multitude of interrelated challenges that have persisted over time. The findings indicate that the current VET system is not adequately equipped to meet the demands of a rapidly changing labor market, resulting in a significant skills gap among graduates. This gap not only affects the employability of individuals but also hampers the overall economic development of the country. One of the primary issues identified is the outdated curriculum that fails to reflect contemporary industry standards and technological advancements. As industries evolve, so too must the educational programs designed to prepare students for these fields. The lack of regular updates to the curriculum, coupled with insufficient engagement from industry stakeholders, has led to a disconnect between the skills taught in vocational schools and those required by employers. To address this, it is imperative to establish a collaborative framework that fosters ongoing dialogue between educational institutions and businesses. This partnership should focus on developing curricula that are responsive to labor market needs, ensuring that students acquire relevant skills that enhance their employability. Furthermore, the study highlights the critical need for increased funding and resources dedicated to VET. The current financial constraints limit the ability of vocational schools to invest in modern equipment, facilities, and teaching materials, which are essential for providing high-quality education. A strategic approach to funding, including public-private partnerships and incentives for businesses to invest in vocational training, could significantly enhance the quality of VET programs. Additionally, the government should consider implementing policies that provide financial support for students engaged in dual education programs, thereby encouraging more young people to pursue vocational training. Another significant challenge is the shortage of qualified educators in the VET sector. Many vocational schools struggle to attract and retain skilled teachers who possess both the necessary academic qualifications and practical industry experience. To combat this issue, it is essential to develop comprehensive professional development programs that not only enhance the pedagogical skills of educators but also ensure they remain current with industry practices. Incentives such as competitive



salaries, career advancement opportunities, and continuous training can help attract and retain high-quality teaching staff. Moreover, the establishment of a robust quality assurance framework is crucial for monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of VET programs. This framework should include regular assessments of educational outcomes, feedback mechanisms from employers, and a system for tracking graduates' career progression. By implementing a transparent quality assurance process, stakeholders can identify areas for improvement and ensure that vocational education remains aligned with the needs of the economy.

The challenges facing VET in Bulgaria are significant but not insurmountable. By adopting a holistic approach that encompasses curriculum reform, increased funding, enhanced teacher training, and robust quality assurance mechanisms, Bulgaria can revitalize its VET system. This revitalization is essential not only for improving the employability of graduates but also for fostering a skilled workforce that can drive economic growth and innovation. The path forward requires a concerted effort from all stakeholders, including government, educational institutions, and industry partners, to create a sustainable and effective vocational education system that meets the needs of both students and the economy. Through collaborative action and strategic investment, Bulgaria can transform its vocational education landscape, ultimately benefiting individuals and society as a whole.

NOTES:

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