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**Title**

University graduates' skills mismatches in Central Asia : employers' perspectives from post-Soviet Tajikistan / Dilrabo Jonbekova

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**Abstract**

This paper examines employers' perspectives about university graduates' skills and preparation for employment in post-Soviet Tajikistan. It explores the mismatch between the skills university graduates acquire and the skills required in the job market, and addresses some of the underlying reasons for the perceived skills mismatch. Thematic analysis of interviews with employers' and secondary data suggest that the quality of higher education has declined considerably over the past two decades, widening the gap between the skills acquired by university graduates and those required by employers. The findings show that despite a rapid expansion of the higher education sector in Tajikistan, an increasing number of individuals are obtaining degrees, but fail to demonstrate a basic understanding of their field of study. I argue that while the skills mismatch derives from the challenges faced by the education system, a latent labor market and a weak economy are also contributing to the skills mismatch. The goals set by politicians and policy-makers, envisioning the

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internationalization of education and the preparation of the graduates to be responsive to the local and global labor market needs, seem far from being achieved in the near future. Employers' perspectives suggest that the reform of the education sector without the creation of more decent job opportunities will likely exacerbate the current skills mismatch in Tajikistan. (HRK / Abstract übernommen)