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MSS to reorganize universities with the aim of developing the workforce for small and medium enterprises (SMEs) focusing on future strategic industries

MSS plans to expand the number of universities from three to six for SME workforce development and create integrated and interdisciplinary degree programs for advanced industry training.

MSS will establish a system for demand-driven talent development by connecting with human resource training programs.

Sejong, March 19, 2024 – The Ministry of SMEs and Startups (Minister OH Youngju) plans to reorganize universities for SME workforce development. This will be achieved through agreed departments and technological training programs that focus on future strategic industries. The restructuring initiatives are designed to address the changing industrial landscape, including digital transformation, demographic cliffs, and regional decline.

① Education and Training Courses by Agreement to develop the workforce for SMEs

Education by agreement, also known as agreed departments, is a program designed to provide post-employment education. It aims to help small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) employees obtain degrees ranging from associate degrees to Ph.D. The degree programs are established at universities and are intended to train SME employees to become key personnel within their companies.

MSS is planning to diversify the university introduction model that was established in 2023 to develop the workforce of small and medium enterprises (SMEs). This diversification will take different forms, such as connecting with new technology and industries, collaborating with local governments, and promoting cooperation among large corporations, middle-standing enterprises, and small businesses. In addition, MSS plans to increase the number of universities for SME employees from three to six. The aim is to strengthen the supply of advanced industry talents to regional SMEs. At present, those universities for SME employees operate an agreed department, offering all degree programs, such as bachelor's, master's, and doctorate degrees integrated with regional strategic industries.

Furthermore, MSS plans to strengthen degree support for industry-academia collaboration projects within agreed departments and expand multidisciplinary programs between agreed departments and regular departments to enhance hands-on, problem-solving education focused on practical applications.

MSS will introduce thesis supervision programs for master's and doctorate students in agreed departments to meet the growing demand for advanced degree programs and cultivate talented individuals.

② Technological Training Programs

Technological training programs are programs that offer integrated education for four years, consisting of vocational high school for two years and junior college for two years) to systematically nurture skilled personnel demanded by SMEs in practical fields.

MSS has outlined two important plans to enhance talent development. First, MSS aims to establish a system that connects graduates of the technological training programs with agreed departments. This will ensure that talent development is demand-driven. Second, MSS will establish technological training classes in excellent specialized high schools. This will provide students with a ladder for growth from high school to associate's and up until doctorate degree level.

MSS plans to create a virtuous cycle by utilizing its database of SMEs, which includes around 30,000 'Pretty good SMEs.' They will share this pool of excellent companies with the education project to increase the influx of talent to SMEs through good job matching.

PARK Jong-chan, Director General for SME Policy, stated, "Due to the restructuring of the industrial sector, there is a need to cultivate skilled technical personnel who can respond to the demand for new technology and talents in SMEs." He added, "Our goal is to create a nurturing ecosystem for talented individuals in strategic industries by restructuring SME talent universities. "