

Changes in the Structure of Educational System in the Function of Millennium Tendencies

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Abstract

Education in future implies a reconstruction in the education system. This practically means implementation of reform of the entire educational system and development of conception of the permanent education accorded with social needs and changes. The presented work here is an integral part of a broader set up and realized preliminary project on „Redefinition of Education Structure of Republic of Serbia“ forwarded to the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Serbia in 2010. The preliminary project guided by Ph.D. Miroslav Kuka and Ph.D. Vukosava Živković was realized in the team work and in coordination of work of the central and regional working groups in Serbia and the surrounding countries having 80 collaborators in total working on the project. Model of our structure of the education system extends the period of compulsory education up to 10 years of age (till the first grade of high school which is the same for all regarding the curriculum) and is based on differentiation of the education levels (from preschool to high school) in cycles, which, on their part, are defined by aims and tasks. Short-term, middle-term and long-term aims have been clearly defined and concise division of competence and the follow-up methods of successfulness of its implementation has been made within the proposal of our model.

Keywords: *Education system, redefinition, education structure, modifications and reform*

Introduction

A learning process can be concisely described as the process of the confrontation of a motivated or unmotivated individual with certain obstacles which represent a difficulty for achieving his objectives (or educational objectives) and fulfilling his motives. In order to overcome those obstacles and eliminate the difficulties, the individual takes investigative steps (or they are often being recommended) until he overcomes the obstacle with those steps, that is, until he eliminates the difficulty towards the objective. The pressures aimed at modifications that would get the educational process in the position in which it would suit better the new needs are increasing with time. Pedagogical practice confirmed many times that some modifications not only don't lead towards the improvement of success within the education, but also become the source of regression in this area (advocating the so-called general socio-trend directions with the tendency of incorporating them into the educational process as well). Our project with its conceptual approach, the reform within the structure of the education system, implies the strategy of modifications "from

the bottom up”, that is, the strategy in which the local initiatives of higher education institutions (faculties, institutes, vocational schools...) come to expression. This approach would suit the thesis which believes that less successful strategies of improving the educational process are the ones that operate from higher levels, where the politics is being created, and which are characteristic to rely on consultants that influence externally and have no connection with educational practice except intuitive assumptions.

In which category would our redefinition of the education system structure be classified?

Depending on the principle of modifications (reforms), we can speak of four types of possible changes in the existing pedagogical practice: adaptive, external, regulatory and structural. Our reform in this general setting refers to the structural type of modification, which is aimed towards changes in the organizational structure of the education system, but it doesn't affect the realization of the educational process. Primarily, the structural systemic modifications are directed to economy, rationality, educational liberalization and acquisition of specific knowledge. Essentially, education is, with our structure, directed to results, that is, to defined knowledge, skills, attitudes and values that students should have after finishing a certain education cycle. Our modifications within the already existing structure can be categorized under the model of the so-called controlled expansion. This approach to reforms is the most appropriate for education systems which don't need radical changes, but the interventions of limited proportions – alterations, repairs, modifications, that is, the implementation of new details into the existing system, i.e. structure. Modifications of this kind have a character of conceptual modernization aimed towards better achievements of students in school. In the educational process, the main attention should be paid to knowledge structure, to the development of one idea from another, and to what age level can given algorithm (with its structural concretization) be applied. The structure is what enables to sort out and classify unfamiliar impressions and in that way what is learnt gets meaning and through meaning it initiates other motivators in the educational process. What should be emphasized in our approach is the idea that every content of teaching can be taught effectively at any level of student's development, provided that the given ideas and principles are adapted didactically in order for the student to use them. Our starting point in these evaluations, which differ from structural conceptions from 30 - 40 years ago, starts from the point that the development of a child is mostly conditioned by social factors. How far will a child get in the intellectual development and when we ourselves can influence the same, primarily depends on the cultural surrounding, that is, on the impact of the environment. The development of consciousness of every individual, including children aged 7 – 18 years (our sample within the redefined structure of the education system), has had such a cognitive leap in the last 30 years (perception, reasoning, anticipation, the critical thinking process, the time consistency of attitudes, interests...), that everything that was true in perceptive age gradations of the children at the given age once, has now moved for at least one generation up. Many social psychologists that analyse the mental and manual skills of the children of different age and compare them with earlier similar studies share this view. Hence, in our system of education structure we start with perceptively cognitive and psycho-motor, manual skills of the children at the given age, with aims and tasks that have been placed upon them as well as with the relevance of the process of rationalization and economy of the educational process. Specifically our education structure, the model of controlled liberal education – is oriented towards a child, supports active teaching concretized on the example of the differentiated cycles at given educational levels, as well as the redefined curriculum according to it.

Socio-Educational Rationale For The Implemenation Of Our Education Structure

The model of our structure of the education system is based on the differentiation of the educational levels (from pre-school to high school) on cycles, which are determined by the defined aims and tasks for each specific age. Those aims are defined within the reform of the existing education itself which is directed to curriculum and its transfer to education directed to outcomes, that is, defined knowledge, skills, attitudes and values that students should acquire after finishing a certain education cycle. One of the main outcomes of our structure, which is in this segment primarily sociologically determined, is the extension of the period of compulsory education from 8 i.e. 9 years, to 10 years (V cycles) which is in accordance with European and other international tendencies in education. In most countries of the world education begins at the age of 6 or 7 years, and in some countries even earlier. The duration of the compulsory education varies, but in most cases is 9 years and it is finished at the age of 15 – 16 years. From the objectives set within the pre-school education (stands for 0 grade, i.e. I cycle), the same transforms from the current playgrounds into a program defined socio-educational environment. The responsibilities of the educator increase with regard to the demands that are being requested from him. Terminological dichotomy, as in our country so in the world, about defining the notion of primary education (*primary education, elementary education, l'enseignement primaire élémentaire*) in the period from year 1992 – 1996 is defined by means of the new version of the International Standard Classification of Education. According to the new version of the classification of education, primary education includes the first level of education (ISCED level 1) that is the first cycle of basic education. This level generally lasts from 5 – 7 years of regular schooling that includes all levels of education. The second level of education (secondary education) has two levels: the first level or the second cycle of basic education (ISCED level 2) and the second level or the third cycle (ISCED level 3). Unlike the concept of basic education, compulsory education is more easily defined and regardless of the structure of the education system in certain countries, it (*compulsory education, schulpflicht, obligatoire, obzatel'noe, etc.*) represents schooling that is obligatory by law for children of certain age. Compulsory education by its essence and purpose makes the basis for the formal structure of the education system. What is in common for almost all countries is the fact that compulsory education is of general education character. Its duration differs and depends on a school system and prerequisites for mass education. In most countries, besides primary education, compulsory education also includes the first level of secondary education, which is the conception of our structure as well (V cycle). In our conception of education structure, the grade repetition is abolished and replaced with the form of moving students to a higher grade with obligatory re-attendance of subjects that are not acquired properly in terms of knowledge (at least 50% of the anticipated number of classes for that subject at the year level). Starting from III – V cycle (with the transition from class to subject teaching) the student can transfer four or less subjects from one grade to the next. In case that at the end of a school year a student has more than four negative grades, the categorization of subjects is conducted for the level of compulsory education (basic subjects → compulsory subjects). If a student is being moved more than three times during compulsory education, therefore almost every grade, he limits his education in that way to the level of compulsory education (to the end of V cycle). At the end of III cycle, the check of the acquired knowledge is introduced, by means of the test of general knowledge as well as the check of potential advancement within intellectual abilities as compared to the enrolment period. Through these data and information on typifying students' personalities → completed by a class master as well as an educator at the end of I cycle, a new formation of the groups (classes) of given grades is

conducted, within the already familiar educational environment (school). This is, in addition to monitoring the rate of acquired knowledge, skills and character traits, a way for the children to be directly exposed to the challenges of social adaptability within the partially familiar social environment, which is also a good preparation for the next redefining of groups that follows in high school and is predominantly determined by the unfamiliar social environment. The first grade of high school is obligatory for everyone and regardless of the type of school has the same curriculum. This structure initiates the idea that through the controlled liberalization of the educational process, the same enhances and develops the interest of children for education even after a cycle of compulsory education.

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