

Education System In The United Kingdom Of Great Britain And Northern Ireland And Its Implications On The Education System In The Republic Of Serbia

Kosta Voskresenski¹, Olga Deretić², Vanja Voskresenski³

¹ University of Novi Sad, Technical faculty "Mihajlo Pupin", Zrenjanin, Serbia,

² Technical College of Applied Sciences, Zrenjanin, Serbia,

³ Hemofarm AD, Vrsac, Serbia

Abstract

The harmonisation process of education systems of European countries started in the 1990s. The Anglo-Saxon system developed in the United Kingdom became generally adopted and globally dominant because it proved to be more flexible and effective in the age of globalization and changes in society, economy and labour market. Serbia joined this process in 2003 with the education reform which was supposed to introduce some novelties based on the UK system. The paper reviews those characteristics of the education system in the UK which Serbia adopted as objectives of its reform in order to make it more effective and compatible with other European education systems.

Key words: education, reform.

1. Introduction

At the beginning of this century Serbia started the period of transition beginning with reforms of its society and the state with the aim of creating a qualitatively new state able to join the world and European integrations.

One of the reforms started in this period with great ambition was the education reform. In this regard, the Government of Serbia proclaimed the following objectives of the forthcoming education reform: to reorganise the school system in order to create conditions for its more effective contribution to economic recovery of the country [1]; to modernise and reorganise the school system as an essential support to development of democracy in the country and its future European integration.

The Government also set some specific objectives of the education system reformed in this way: to develop generative and transferable knowledge, comprehension skills and effective problem solving skills, abilities of decision-making in complex situations and communication skills; to acquire life skills and functional literacy necessary in a modern information society; to develop a value system which respects differences and justness as well as other most valuable elements of the national tradition.

In order to reach these objectives in the period of reforms and changes in a wider social context it is necessary to decentralise the system, provide qualitative education for everybody, democratise the education system by creation of conditions for involvement of interested parties in the decision-making process, to introduce the program of education for a civil society and education for democracy, to provide coordination between education and economy so that education can meet the contemporary social and economic needs.

In preparation and implementation of education reform Serbia was lagging behind other European countries which offered an opportunity to consider all good and bad experiences of other countries, so the preparations of reforms involved the consideration of European education area above all [2]. The reforms started as early as in 2002, they were fast-paced in one period or slower in another period, depending on political circumstances (alternation of political parties in power), or due to internal weaknesses, lack of sufficient financial conditions which could support the reforms and resistance to reforms that occurred at every level.

The following is a review of those aspects of the education reform in Serbia which relied on the experience and solutions of the United Kingdom, but also those solutions which seem usable in the education reform in Serbia as they are in compliance with the proclaimed objectives of the education reform.

2. Decentralisation of the System – Legal Regulations of Education and Authorities Which Implement the Educational Policy

The first condition necessary for reaching the objectives of the reform is decentralisation of the system. The following is a description of differences between the education system in the UK and the one in Serbia in this regard as well as possible solutions which can be implemented.

In the United Kingdom the power is passed on to local level and is divided territorially; therefore, the area of education is also divided territorially between Department for Education and Skills - DfES in England, Welsh Assembly Government's Department for Training and Education – DfTE and Department of Education - DE in Northern Ireland, which are the government departments responsible for education along with Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education and Scottish Qualification Authority[3].

The 1980s were in the United Kingdom, as in the rest of Europe, the years of overall reforms in education. From pre-school education all the way to education of adults, all educational institutions faced considerable changes. The reforms comprised numerous issues in the area of education and the government introduced a series of changes in curriculum and new examinations, but also considered other issues not closely connected with schools, such as vocational and professional training of employed people, training programmes for young people, etc.

All the novelties introduced by reforms in the UK were also proposed in the reforms in Serbia, with modifications which reflect particularities of the state, culture and its degree of development and its tradition in education. Thus, it was planned to develop a curriculum with new teaching and learning contents and subjects, to put accent on initial education and professional development of teachers, self-evaluation in schools and to introduce a new method of governing the schools.

In this regard Serbia is more centralised than the UK. As part of the executive power the Ministry of Education is responsible for education in general while the Committee for Education of the National Assembly has legislative power in this area. There are also other institutions and agencies for different levels of education, but not for different regional and local levels[4]. In other words, the educational policy is created at the state level while the educational authorities at the local level have the task to implement this policy with little freedom in modification and adjustment of education to the needs of local communities. Such organisation of educational authority comes from the political and

government system; the United Kingdom is a country with quite different organisation which consists of four territorial units each of which has its particularities. However, there are several regions in Serbia too, with differences in population, culture, tradition and degree of economic development, which should be taken into consideration in creation of educational policy.

Although there are opinions that education should be decentralised with greater freedom for local communities, schools and teachers in selection of teaching contents and methods, governing the assets and other issues, the question is whether too much freedom would produce such a variety of education that it could not be considered a uniformed education system; on the other hand, a rigid curriculum may bring uniformity where everybody learns everything. At this point the experience of the United Kingdom should be considered where after a period of great freedom vested in local educational authorities, the conclusion was reached that there should be a common framework at the national level.

3. The Role of Regional and Local Education Authorities and School Governing

In the area of administration, teaching content, teachers, financing and evaluation, the reforms in the UK brought changes in the role and responsibilities of Department of Education, Local Education Authorities – LEA, teachers, church and other factors involved in education, which was legally regulated in The Education Act 1944. The responsibilities gradually passed from LEAs to the Secretary of State for Education and the school governing bodies.

The government introduced the model of Board of Directors for governing schools. It is a body with dual responsibility, governing and control. They consist of “shareholders”, i.e. those who finance schools through taxes, “users” (service users and employers) and “service providers” (teachers).

The education acts adopted later stipulated more significant roles for parents, teachers and employers who became involved in school governing bodies. This model of school governing diminished the role of LEAs. It was believed that this is the best solution for making good schools where children could acquire education useful for the state and society, for creating market conditions where supply and demand meet.

It is interesting that in 2005 the government of Tony Blair announced that the schools would have greater freedom to choose their external partners with no approval of the LEAs, and that even parents themselves would be given the right to set up schools. The idea was to stimulate competition

between primary and secondary schools which would compete for their service users in the market.

In line with this idea and to encourage schools to become independent state schools (“trust schools”) backed by private sponsors - businesses, charities, faith groups, universities or parent and community organisations, the government issued the White Paper, Higher Standards, Better Schools for All, in 2005 [5]. According to it the schools would determine their own curriculum and ethos, would appoint the governing body, have their own assets, employ their own staff and set their own admissions policy to ensure a mix of abilities.

In this regard Serbia is more centralised. The Ministry of Education establishes Regional School Authorities which have the role of branch offices. Their main responsibilities range from professional and pedagogical control and inspection to support in development, planning and quality.

However, in order to provide education of the professionals that the local community has a need for, it would be necessary to use the model implemented in the UK and give these Regional School Authorities the role of connecting point between education and the world of work which would involve local “service users”, i.e. employers and parents and give them freedom to partly create and finance educational policy in the part they are interested in.

This could be one of the options on the way of democratisation of education system with creation of conditions to involve interest groups in the decision-making process. Such legally regulated solution would offer possibility to service users to create the profile of professionals educated and trained for the needs of their businesses by investing in their education.

4. Financing

The central UK government provides funding for each LEA in compliance with Government's Standard Spending Assessment which is used to finance their work. LEAs have freedom and responsibility to set a budget for the education service in their area and determine the funding for the individual school. However, the central government warned the LEAs that they should close up the schools with no sufficient number of pupils enrolled or to merge several such schools and use the funds saved in this way for educational priorities set by the government. The LEAs have limited funds, but the government offered special privileges to those which successfully use their funds. This should provide equal funding for schools under different local education authorities.

The individual schools budget is delegated to schools using a local funding formula, or ‘scheme for financing schools’. The individual school allocations are known as 'budget shares'. Each LEA develops its own scheme for financing schools, in accordance with the School Finance (England) Regulations 2008. LEAs also have a statutory duty to consult with the local Schools Forum when determining or changing their scheme. The school finance regulations specify factors which must be taken into account and factors which may be taken into account.

Since financing the schools and generally, investing in school system and education has been a problem in Serbia for a longer period and as there is always a gap between needs and available funds for meeting those needs, it seems reasonable to establish “trust schools” as a model of school financing system. The local communities should have freedom to try to look for third parties and encourage them to find their interest in investing in schools[6]. Furthermore, this model would provide an easier access to educational resources at regional and local level and a new model of managing and governing would be introduced to promote professional responsibility.

5. Curriculum

In order to create conditions for development of new knowledge and cognitive skills necessary in changed production and development circumstances as well as life skills needed for integration into information society, education based on curriculum with clearly set outcomes has given favourable results in the UK and in other countries which have established their national curricula. It provides a flexible teaching and learning easily adaptable to change.

The National Curriculum (or Curriculum for Excellence as it is called in Scotland) in the UK is a framework used by schools to provide a balanced and consistent teaching and learning. It sets out the content of what will be taught and sets attainment targets for learning. It also determines how performance will be assessed and reported. It also gives teachers, pupils, parents, employers and the wider community a clear and shared understanding of the skills and knowledge that young people will gain at school. On the other hand, schools are free to plan and organise teaching and learning within the framework of the National Curriculum, in the way that best meets the needs of their pupils. To achieve this, schools may use the Qualifications and Curriculum Development Agency (QCDA) Schemes of Work to plan their curriculum. These schemes

help them to adapt the National Curriculum's objectives to teaching and learning activities.

Apart from national curriculum, establishing of standards in assessing pupils' achievements emerges as a further problem which should be solved within the education reform in Serbia, because they could serve as objective indicators of the quality of curriculum. The UK solved this problem with standard tests (exams) taken after each stage of education (key stages). Teaching in primary and secondary schools is organised according to the National Curriculum which determines subjects and teaching contents taught in each year of schooling. For each subject, there is a programme of study which describes the subject knowledge, skills and understanding pupils are expected to develop during each key stage. At the end of each key stage or block of years, pupils take standard tests used to assess their knowledge [7]. The tests are named by the key stages, Key Stage 1, Key Stage 2, Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4.

Creation of national curriculum was one of the objectives of education reform in Serbia. It should define the learning outcomes, i.e. the minimum of acquired knowledge and skills after primary and secondary education, while schools would have freedom to create 30% of the curriculum in compliance with the needs of their pupils and the local community. Curriculum-based teaching certainly requires training for teachers, additional employment of teachers and therefore additional investment in education, so it was planned to gradually introduce the curriculum and education cycles (stages).

6. Evaluation of Schools

The UK government legally regulated that achievements of pupils, teachers and schools are regularly evaluated and reported. It also issued Parent's Charter to encourage parents to cooperate with schools, all in line with the concept of rights vested in users to participate in decision-making. School governing bodies must issue annual reports on the schools results and achievements in meeting the needs of pupils, parents, local community and employers.

The evaluation and reports on school performance should also be introduced in Serbia, but parents' and employers' involvement should be first ensured. They should have the right to create education and creation of professionals educated in school with possibility to finance the professionals they need. Besides, if parents are given the right to choose the school for their children, having the evaluation

results and reports of school would help them in selection.

7. Assessment of Pupils

Pupils in the UK are assessed in compliance with the attainment targets found in the National Curriculum at the age of 7, 11, 14 when they sit for key stage exams and the final GCSE (General Certificate of Secondary Education) exam at the age of 16.

Beside teacher assessment during the school year, at the end of every key stage pupils' knowledge and skills are assessed at the exams (tests) based on the National Curriculum. The results of these tests are published in school reports and offer information to teachers, parents and all partners in education about progress every pupil has made and compares every pupil's test performance to national benchmarks.

The test taken at the national level seems a good way to have an insight into the quality of the national curriculum itself, as well as the work of teachers, schools and pupils. However, this testing may have certain constraints which could reduce the level of their objectiveness. Firstly, pupils may be under stress when they start preparations for tests. Secondly, according to some opinions the tests may put teachers under stress, because the test results affect their school ranking [8]. Accordingly, it may happen that teaching a subject becomes just a preparation for the test and hence a teacher may neglect other aspects of the curriculum.

The similar situation happens with the mathematics and mother tongue tests the Serbian pupils sit for at the end of the primary school. The question is how much they really indicate the knowledge a pupil has acquired in these two subjects and how much they are a mere result of learning the already prepared question and answers by heart. On the other hand, the test results indicate just the knowledge, but not the skills a pupil has acquired during his education in primary school not only in these two subjects, but also in cross-curricular contents. Finally, the tests assess the knowledge in mathematics and mother tongue only, but neglects the knowledge acquired in other subjects.

8. Self-evaluation and inspection

One of the objectives of the education reform in Serbia was to alter the role of inspection, from administrative control to giving teaching support and assistance. The inspection in the UK is aimed at evaluation of schools and teachers in respect of

achieved outcomes and giving support in self-evaluation.

The authorities such as Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA), Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA), Qualifications, Curriculum and Assessment Authority for Wales (ACCAC) and Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment in Northern Ireland (CCEA) work on assessment of pupils' achievement, but they also stress the importance of development planning in schools based on self-evaluation. Schools must continuously evaluate their work in intervals between annual inspection visits. Evaluation of pupils' achievement, which is part of self-evaluation process, is also compulsory in all schools. They must regularly publish the results of their development initiatives and achievements in annual reports made public for parents and all partners. Schools and school governing bodies in the UK publish school performance tables to help parents choose the best school for their child [9]. They have responsibility to make public the general targets and objectives of the school and educational policy of the school, information about implementation of the National Curriculum and extra-curricular activities, school attendance, national test results, etc. They also make an annual report about school development and organise meeting with parents to discuss it.

Unlike the schools in the UK, Serbian schools do not publish their annual reports although every school has the obligation to make it. They are usually discussed at school boards' meetings, but generally they are not available for parents. Schools regularly publish the results their pupils have in regional or national or even international competitions, projects and other activities, but it would be useful for parents and future pupils to learn about the performance of every school especially compared with the standards across the country. Furthermore, results of a pupil at the end of school year are not compared to other pupils' results, let alone the national standards. However, this could help parents see the level of knowledge their child has really acquired.

9. Teachers

Since one of the objectives was orientation towards quality of education, the reform in Serbia included development of financial mechanisms to support professional development of teachers and definition of its structure.

The problem of professional training of teachers in Serbia is most evident in vocational schools. Professional subjects in these schools are taught by

teachers who have not attended teachers colleges, i.e. engineers, doctors, technologists. During their education they have not had any training which involved teaching methods or lessons preparation, and even the colleges which prepare students for teachers face the problem of internship which is necessary in order to prepare them for the classroom work. They have a solid knowledge of their field of study, but often do not know how to convey their knowledge to pupils or students. As for now, their training is organised in courses for professional development, but a long-term objective should be their training within their initial education.

Teacher training in the UK is organised in several ways. To become a teacher and obtain the Qualified Teacher Status, one may choose between several options. The first option is to study for 3 to 4 years to complete first undergraduate degree. The qualification is a Bachelor of Education and incorporates specific subject areas with an education component. The second option is after completion of two years of higher education and the two-year training program while working in school as an unqualified teacher. The third option is to get a Postgraduate Certificate in Education which can be completed by people who already have a bachelor degree in a specific field. The teacher training course can take one year when teaching methodologies for successful delivering of subject specialties are learned.

Apparently, initial education of teachers is given considerable importance since the Qualified Teacher Status may not be obtained without proper teacher training in the classroom. The education reform in Serbia prepared similar model to the third option for training of teachers with no initial teaching knowledge.

After obtaining the Qualified Teacher Status teachers are supposed to have at least three days per year of professional development at specialised courses for specific subjects, for teaching young pupils, pupil's behaviour management, or similar. This kind of professional development is organised in Serbia, too.

Beside professional development, evaluation of teachers' performance is also stressed. Regular evaluation should be beneficial for teachers themselves, school governing bodies and parents to establish at what extend their performances are in compliance with the school objectives and for taking measures for improvement, if necessary [10].

10. Primary schools and secondary schools

The main differences between compulsory education in the UK and Serbia is in its duration

(eleven years, primary and secondary education vs. eight years of primary education), the age when children start school (the age of 5 vs. the age of 6½) and the national tests prescribed in the National Curriculum. Primary school in Serbia lasts for eight years and ends with a test which all pupils take to have the right to enrol in secondary school.

To improve the pupils' performance in some UK primary schools children are selected in groups A, B, C and D according to their abilities, with weak pupils in group D. However, although this selection according to abilities may seem to produce better results, it should be borne in mind that the only way to establish the efficiency of teaching pupils organised in groups is permanent assessment. There are surveys and studies in the UK with the aim of establishing the effects learning in mixed ability classes and streamed classes have on pupils' results. The conclusion of all studies carried on so far is that this kind of organising the teaching is good for good pupils and bad for weaker pupils.

Secondary schools in the UK embrace all pupils regardless of their abilities. Children of different social background attend secondary schools which are therefore called "comprehensive" which is a model adopted in most parts of the UK. The teaching in comprehensive schools is organised in a way that it encourages pupils to take an active part in teaching and learning process. The rhythm of teaching and learning is adaptable to the needs of every pupil. Teaching is based on individual projects, problem-solving, specific issues discussion and computers as the main teaching aid. There is no entrance exam nor any other selection of children for enrolment and it ends at the age of 16. It is interesting that there is no repeating of classes.

In Serbia there are similar secondary schools which offer general education, but they select pupils according to the results they had at the end of primary school tests. The children may choose between majors in science, humanities, or general (both science and humanities subjects are equally taught). Apart from these schools, gifted children may attend secondary schools of mathematics, languages or sport.

In recent years, reform of these secondary schools has been under preparation with some similarities to comprehensive schools in the matter of teaching and learning. The curriculum has been prepared according to the Scottish model which is flexible with many variations [11]. Teaching is pupil-oriented with consideration of different needs, abilities and talents of individuals or the whole class of pupils.

11. Further and higher education

Higher education in the UK is in universities, colleges and art and music colleges. All universities are autonomous institutions, especially in teaching performance. Universities have generally been instituted by Royal Charter or Act of Parliament. Most universities consist of colleges which may have departments. The umbrella organisation for all universities is Universities UK which exists to promote, develop and champion the universities of the UK.

Fragmentation of universities in Serbia and mainly monodisciplinary structure of faculties (or departments) impairs flexibility in curriculum development and mobility from one to another faculty. The Law on Higher Education ensures greater degree of integration. Although no state university has used this possibility in the right way, in different circumstances imposed by financial situation or accreditation or due to the competition, they may be forced to waive their legal identity. Changes in organisational structure does not mean only integration of university, but also a different mode of managing the teaching process, different distribution of responsibilities within one institution, introduction of information systems to support a new mode of studying.

Further education in the UK is characterised by great diversity offered to potential users who may select among a wide variety of courses leading to different degrees and certificates, different mode and length of studying. There are so called "sandwich" courses which combine studying with training periods spent in industry. They last for four years leading to Honours Degree. This mode of studying is possible mainly in colleges of advanced technology. Training in industry lasts for one year and must be in a company and a position which corresponds with the field of study at the college. In case of studying modern foreign languages, the course normally incorporates a year in the target language country.

This mode of studying may be as a full-time studying in which case students attend classes, which lasts more than average length of time (more than 19 weeks in the academic year) with more credits allocated. Some courses are attended as part-time studying comprising only a part of the program of study prescribed for a particular term in blocks of concentrated studying with periods of practical work during which the students do their work experience. This mode of studying in blocks is organised several days every week for several weeks in a year.

Similar modes of studying which do not incorporate a year spent in a company, but are organised for employed people, are organised in colleges and universities as undergraduate or

graduate studies. Depending on providers and studies, teaching is organised in daily or weekly blocks, as evening classes, via e-mail, or independent work at home with assessment taking place in colleges (Open University).

On the other hand, there is a choice of courses leading to various certificates and degrees, not all of them university degrees, but all valued either as a qualification within the National Qualification Framework, or one of the steps taken towards a university degree.

This variety and diversity of degrees and certificates is necessary in our education system due to the following reasons. Firstly, higher education is not a privilege of a chosen few, but a necessary requirement for many professions in successful job seeking at the labour market. Then, one of the constraints of our post-secondary education is its closeness and organisation which makes it available only to those who do not work. In the growing competition of private universities, this mode of studying and acquiring of qualifications will surely be organised in state universities very soon. Besides, education will surely have to respond to the needs of economy which change more rapidly than education system. Finally, one of weak points of today's higher education is the lack of different qualifications after certain number years of education; in other words, a degree is acquired only after completion of three or four years of studying.

This is particularly important for Serbia where in the previous higher education system a considerable number of students left universities and colleges before completion due to their needs to find a job. In this case, they seem to have been studying in vain because although they have years of studying; only their secondary school diploma counts. All the exams passed during these years can not lead to any formal recognition...

Another reason for introduction of certificates is the fact that European population changes their professions or work position six to seven times during their length of service. It means that every time they have to be educated for a new profession because permanent development in technology and production, opening and closing up of companies, force them to update their knowledge and skills so they could respond to new challenges. It would be impossible for them to spend years in order to get a new education or training or to get a degree. This is the reason why studying should be organised in a way that it is completed fast, during employment if necessary and based on employment conditions, in conditions adaptable for students' needs.

The next problem is the national qualifications framework. Serbia has not yet developed it although it is one of the obligations in the Bologna process.

There are indications that those involved in employment and employability are also involved in national qualifications framework development [12]. However, the absence of academic community from this process or leaving it in the hands of only academic community may cause problems to future professionals in recognition of their qualifications in the labour market.

As for financing of higher education, the UK government provides funds for it. Tuition fees are another source of financing universities and colleges. They make up about one quarter of total costs of studying. They are paid by students directly to universities for one academic year.

Students may get loans or bursaries to pay tuition fees which were about 3,000 pounds, but the recently elected government of David Cameron raised it to 9,000 pounds. Loans and grants are paid by the government while universities offer bursaries.

In Serbia higher education institutions are financed from the state budget according to the number of successful students whose studying is state-financed, and their own revenues (tuition fees, projects, commercial services, donations, etc.). The amount of tuition fees is determined by the institutions themselves and is calculated differently from one institution to another; it comprises the costs of studying for one academic year i.e. for acquiring 60 ECTS.

Unlike the UK, there is no organised system of financing students who pay their tuition fees in Serbia, although some local communities give bursaries to students according to different criteria, success in studying, financial situation of the family, etc, but there are also companies which give scholarships to students and thus recruit them as their future employees.

12. The Bologna Process

The Bologna Declaration is a document adopted at the meeting of ministers of education of European countries in 1999. The signatories of this document agreed to create the European Higher Education Area – EHEA by 2010 and to implement the necessary reforms.

These reforms and a series of changes which are still being implemented in education system of European countries – signatories of the Declaration are all called the Bologna Process. They involve adoption of a system based on two cycles, undergraduate and graduate and the third cycle, doctoral level of qualifications included in 2003., a unique ECTS system, quality assurance based on accreditation of curricula and higher education

institutions, evaluation of programs of study, modular system and other.

In 2003 at the summit in Berlin, Serbia and Montenegro joined the process which involved the United Kingdom from the very beginning.

Why was it important for Serbia to implement the Bologna Declaration?

The answer to this question may be found in comparison of efficiency of studying in the UK and Serbia. The undergraduate engineering studies in Great Britain last for four years. The program of study is just one third of what students learn in Serbia. In this regard it is less ambitious and enables most of the students to obtain a degree in the shortest time possible [13]. However, it is just a halfway a young engineer has to pass. In the following three years he will have training in industry with trainers specially trained for this. During this period he will receive a salary and have a regular social status. When he finished the training, he will sit for an exam which is not just a formality, but requires serious and long preparations. The system is complex, but functional because it is based on long tradition.

The UK higher education employs more than 387430 academic and non-academic staff (statistics for 2009/2010). During the academic year this system earns and spends about 25 billions of pounds (statistics for 2009/2010). The funds are provided from various sources and distributed between universities. One third of funds is provided through financing scientific researches. They are provided by industry and government and part of these funds is allocated through research councils. However, the system is rather rational. In spite of their research work and the fact they are financed as public institutions, universities mainly operate in the market. Besides, colleges are not legal entities as in Serbia. Unlike integrated universities – including Oxford and Cambridge – which are centralised, the University of Belgrade, like other universities in Serbia, is a loose alliance of faculties (colleges) and institutes.

There are four types of universities in the UK. First, there are Oxford and Cambridge, universities with long tradition and financial resources coming from legacies, among other. Then, there are so-called “red brick” universities like University College London, Bristol, Birmingham, Sheffield, etc. These universities are about a hundred years old and they usually have a city hospital which is important for their financing [14]. The third group “Group 1994” is made up of universities established after the Second World War, like York and Warwick. They are smaller, with smaller number of colleges, organised in a rational way.

The last group are former polytechnics which organized vocational studies and which became universities by the decision of the government in 1992. Their transformation is a result of Tony Blair’s government policy to increase the number of universities with the idea to educate 50% of young people for a university degree by 2010.

The biggest problems in higher education in Serbia is an adequate and full implementation of the Law on Higher Education, especially in timely implementation of some of its provisions and the transition period which became obvious in 2006 with the problem of readability and recognition of titles. Besides, the most important is at which extent it will bring essential changes: mode of studying, institutional organisations and financing of higher education [15].

On the other hand, although the Bologna process is based on the education system in the UK, many students and even teachers in the UK have hardly heard anything about it; while other European countries started immediately with transformation of their education systems, academic community in the UK still has reserves and waits to see the results which reforms will bring to other countries.

13. Conclusion

The latest education reform in Serbia started as a result of overall trends, changes and education reforms in all European countries.

The education system of the UK was ahead because, everybody agrees, education systems in other European countries adopted main characteristics of the UK model when their reforms started. Besides, the European Commission and the Education Council endorsed a 10-year work programme to be implemented based on the Report of the Ministers of Education adopted in 2001 on the future objectives of education and training systems: to improve the quality and effectiveness of EU education and training systems; to ensure that they are accessible to all; to open up education and training to the wider world. The long-term strategic objectives of EU education and training policies are: making lifelong learning and mobility a reality; improving the quality and efficiency of education and training; promoting equity, social cohesion and active citizenship; enhancing creativity and innovation, including entrepreneurship, at all levels of education and training.

Two key features adopted and planned to be implemented from the UK model were decentralization and curriculum, defined through standards and not contents. In its developed form,

decentralisation means independence of schools; they become units of education system and create their profile of work, their development plans, school curriculum, system of self-evaluation, decide about professional development of their staff, and in general, act as small democracy-based enterprises which communicate with their environment, adapt their work to requirements and particularities of the environment – of parents as the main interest party above all – and are responsible for their success and failure. In such schools the role of school councils is essential; they elect the school authorities and teachers and decide about finances and the quality. The role of headmaster is therefore managerial, while teachers decide about their work and teaching contents.

The next big change should be in regard of the curriculum which should be created in qualitatively new way. It means that schools should create their curriculum according to the recommendations and basis in the national curriculum or framework. This document should contain only standards and objectives and learning outcomes which the school is obliged to ensure as a result of the teaching process. This concept of curriculum essentially changes the role of teachers which becomes more complex and demanding.

These two changes – liberalisation of schools and teaching content – entail other changes; education and professional development of teachers, competition in supply of teaching material and textbooks, introduction of external assessment, system of self-evaluation of schools, a changed role of school inspection, a changed mode of financing education, and of course, a reduced and modified role of ministry of education.

However, in order to make the whole system functioning, the whole system requires reforms at the same time and at all levels, if possible. Again the UK model may set an example. After the first PISA testing, the results of British pupils were disappointing and in three years they managed to make a big step forward in quality improvement, and today it is considered a leading country in education with its well-organised and effective system, which is evident by the number of foreign students interested in studying in the UK universities.

References:

- [1]. Zakić M., *Obrazovanje u SAD, SSSR i Zapadnoj Evropi*, Grafos, Beograd, 1970.
- [2]. Ministarstvo prosvete i sporta Republike Srbije, Sektor za razvoj obrazovanja i međunarodnu prosvetnu saradnju: *Kvalitetno obrazovanje za sve – put ka razvijenom društvu*, Beograd, 2002.
- [3]. Ministarstvo prosvete i sporta Republike Srbije, Sektor za razvoj obrazovanja i međunarodnu prosvetnu saradnju, Odeljenje za strateški razvoj obrazovanja: *Kvalitetno obrazovanje za sve – izazovi reforme obrazovanja u Srbiji*, Beograd, 2004.
- [4]. EURYDICE The information network on education in Europe, United Kingdom - England, Wales and Northern Ireland; United Kingdom-Scotland
<http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/Eurydice/portal/page/portal/Eurydice>
- [5]. Gillard, D., *Education in England: a brief history*, 2011.
<http://www.educationengland.org.uk/history/chapter10.html>
- [6]. EURYDICE The Financing of Schools in England, Wales and Northern Ireland
http://www.nfer.ac.uk/shadomx/apps/fms/fmsdownload.cfm?file_uuid=A981A533-C29E-AD4D-0BB5-52CED130797D&siteName=nfer
- [7]. *Understanding the National Curriculum*
<http://www.direct.gov.uk>
- [8]. *Qualified Teacher Status*
<http://tda.gov.uk/get-into-teaching/faqs/becoming-a-teacher/qualified-teacher-status.aspx>
- [9]. *The Bologna Process*
http://www.europeunit.ac.uk/sites/europe_unit2/bologna_process/uk_policy_positions/uk_position_on_qualification_length.cfm
- [10]. Higher Education Statistics Agency
http://www.hesa.ac.uk/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=1898&Itemid=706
- [11]. *Education and Training 2010 – Diverse Systems, Shared Goals*,
http://www.ihep.org/assets/files/gcfp-files/diverse_systems_shared_goals.pdf
- [12]. *The Student Room, Types of University*
http://www.thestudentroom.co.uk/wiki/Types_of_University#Ancient_Universities
- [13]. *Vreme*, br.753, 09.06.2005. *Srpski i britanski univerziteti*
<http://www.vreme.com/cms/view.php?id=418275>
- [14]. House of Commons, Education and Skills Committee, *The Bologna Process, Fourth Report of Session 2006-7*
- [15]. European Commission, *Strategic framework for education and training*
http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-policy/doc28_en.htm

Corresponding author:

Kosta Voskresenski, PhD

Institution:

University of Novi Sad, Technical faculty “Mihajlo Pupin”, Zrenjanin

E-mail: voskri@gmail.com