

SECONDARY VOCATIONAL EDUCATION IN SERVICE OF ECONOMIC GROWTH AND SOCIETY DEVELOPMENT

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Summary

Fast social–political and economic changes European societies have been faced with in the last few decades have had a significant influence on educational changes, highlighting the needs for the reform of educational systems and their adapting to the new needs of economy and society. For this reason, more attention is paid to the issues of reform processes regarding the area of secondary vocational education in professional literature. Such practice is being conditioned by the fact that modernization of this important segment of educational system, having in mind its direct connection to economy and business world, presents a crucial assumption of an overall social and economic development of every country.

For the reasons mentioned above, this paper deals with problems in the reform of vocational education in Serbia, and vocational education is being discussed from the context of economic growth and society development. The aim of this paper is to point out the importance of economic value of education as well as importance of investments in human resources. Theoretical elaboration and set tasks have forced the use of descriptive, comparative-historic and analytical-synthetic method, as well as the use of content analysis. Analysis results, however, indicate that even though today's education economic value of education is undisputed, educational system in our country still faces a multitude of problems and challenges posed by modern society.

Key words: *secondary vocational education, investments in knowledge, economic development, development of human resources, economic value of education.*

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Introductory considerations

Since the education of people became a very significant factor for economic development and an important characteristic of a population, it is now necessary to consider education as a form of capital that has a huge impact on the economy and the overall socio-economic development of a country. Success, progress and the competitive position of countries in the contemporary world largely depend on the intellectual potential of a company they own. Development based on knowledge and innovation is at the centre of development strategies of most countries.

One of the most important features of education is the growing knowledge of the mutual interdependence of education and economic development. Under conditions of rapid scientific and technological development, education is increasingly becoming an immediate force and a decisive factor for economic development of any society. For these reasons, the problem of the need for appropriate staff today is equally present in both developed and developing countries, and is closely associated with the state and the economic situation in each country.

In knowledge based economies the importance and the need for development of intellectual potential of the employees and the population as a whole are being insisted on in particular. This potential is a vital prerequisite and basis of all further development of high-tech organizations.

Investments in staff training are considered as the most comprehensive and most profitable investment, which have significant meaning. Therefore, it is necessary to work on the recognition of the importance and the need to invest in people and education. Investment in education which provides the skills and that enriches knowledge of future workers we consider the key elemental development process of modern society and modern economy. For example, human resources in tourism are one of the most important segments of the quality of the services provided. If a travel agency wants to function optimally and gain profit, it should have educated, motivated, and therefore satisfied staff, because the success of the company lies in their human resources. This also means that behaviour within the organization depends on the educational and cultural values of their employees (Kovačević et al., 2012).

Investing in people is increasing human capacity and more efficient decision-making and, therefore, investment in education must be treated in the same way as investment in capital equipment. Investment in education and the provision of adequate human capital gains the character of the investments and becomes a primary requirement for Serbia. More specifically, education policy is not only a policy of creating human capital, but is part of the overall development of social policies. In this sense, in addition to the observation of quantitative characteristics of the population as a relevant developmental factor, it is important to shed light on the qualitative aspects of the population, expressed in the level of qualification and training structures.

Taking into account all these, multi-functionality and an ever increasing social-economic importance of education and the quantum of change that is necessary to reach this area, we

decided to process the following questions using comparative and analytical-synthetic view:

- education as a factor of economic development of society;
- socio-economic context and the importance of vocational education;
- the concept of competence and qualifications in vocational education ;
- reform of vocational education courses in contemporary social development.

For the purposes of the processing, we decided to use a descriptive, comparative and analytical-synthetic method, and (theoretical) content analysis.

Education of society as a factor of the economic development of the population in Serbia

Education and human capital today are an important prerequisite for economic growth and social development. Investments in the education of human resources become primary in many countries of the modern world, not only because of the need to contribute to economic growth, but also because education has always been associated with certain values in society and it initiated the overall social development.

Because of the connections with the socio-economic, cultural and other aspects of development, educational and qualification structure of the population indicators are of great importance for any society. Therefore it is very important to achieve compliance of the needs of the economy and society and with the availability of work force in terms of its scope and level of education.

Inadequate level of education of the population is one of the serious problems which our country faces and in this sense is a limiting factor for the creation of a knowledge-based society. Although the average level of education in Serbia is growing, analysis, however, suggest that this growth is slower than the one in the EU countries.

Broadest segment of education is primary education –a mandatory form of education. The educational structure of the population aged 15 and above in Serbia, according to the Survey done in 2010 is: 3.2% no schooling, 34.5% lower, 48.4% medium and 13.9% high (MF RS, 2011). Serbia also has a relatively low average level of education among the adult population, and the situation is especially bad in rural areas of southeast Serbia and Roma settlements. Around 20% of village children and half of children from the Roma settlements never start school, in other words there is a high percentage of uneducated population, unemployed and individuals older than 65, which produces poverty and social divisions within the population.

The rate of highly educated population is very low 5,5% of total population in Serbia. Also, there are huge differences on a regional level: Belgrade has by far the biggest amount of population with a faculty degree (11,8%), and above average is just only The South Bačka district (6,7%). One of the problems is the concentration of staff with faculty degrees in big cities, the young who come to university centres (Belgrade, Novi Sad, Niš) to get a faculty diploma, do not come back to the areas they came from. This is because bigger cities offer

better socio-economic conditions and better chances for employment, and also there is a big “brain drain” out of country.

The comparative analysis indicates a bad qualification structure of employed in Serbia. The basic characteristic of European trends in educational structure of employed is the growth of higher qualification levels- above secondary school and at the same time a decrease of all blue collar occupations – highly skilled, skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled workers.

Also, the unemployment rate in Serbia of around 30% is one of the highest in Europe. Also, what are worrying in particular are the facts that out of the official 900 thousand unemployed, around 48% are young people, most of whom have high school degree. Of these almost 90% of the young unemployed ones are waiting for employment for more than 5 years (Đurić, 2012). The high unemployment rate can hardly be justified only by problems that come with the transition process which is affecting our society. Therefore, the problem of unemployment, and the issue of employability and employment, must be viewed in the context of the competencies that the education system provides to young professionals. In that sense, it is especially important to point out the need to reconsider the values of knowledge, skills and abilities acquired during their studies.

The present crisis in the process of transition and accession to the EU has caused the decrease of consumers’ purchasing power, as well as of the influx of direct foreign investments, which requires the creation and application of a new development strategy, especially in the sphere of investments (Miletić et al., 2012). Among other things, the aforementioned problems are caused by the non-existence of vocational education schooling with the labour market demands, and lack of strategy in terms of projections of the need for specific profiles of professionals to match the demands of the modern economy based on the market economy. This is confirmed by the fact of high unemployment among the youth, which at the same time, lack professional qualifications and work skills. Therefore, the content of educational vocational schooling must be oriented to the labour market needs and focus directly on business, profession, or a combination thereof.

Among the mentioned problems, the reform of educational system according to the needs of the economy must become a priority for our country’s future political agenda for social-economic and technological development. Modern technological processes demand an educated population which can use all of the available technology, and in that sense, qualification of human resources for development and application of new technologies gains in importance. Due to the direct connection between vocational education, economic growth and development of society, full attention should be paid to the reform of this important segment of the educational system.

Development based on knowledge and innovation is at the core of developmental strategies in a majority of developed countries. Developed societies seek to become “knowledge societies”. Having in mind that the effects of education do not only influence individuals, but also society, it can be said that in the modern world knowledge becomes a basic developmental factor. Therefore, the establishment of educational system, which is in tune with needs of the

economy, means making of solid links between employers, educational institutions, scientific institutions in appropriate areas and job market. These links must be institutionalized on local, national or regional level. These links are necessary for so as to guarantee that education will follow the demands of the economy for staff which will have the relevant expertise, in tune with levels of modern technological growth.

In economies based on knowledge the economic growth and development are identified with the scientific-technological progress and continuous “intellectualization of the basic factors of production, with the development of human resources and human capital as the most important factor of economic growth and social development. The human capital is now increasingly referred to as a new factor of production which is the most reliable evidence of the newly emerged reality: while earlier material resources and capital assets (tangible resources) accounted for about 80% in the execution of business plans and in creating and implementing the goals of the organization, a human factor “intangible resources” (less tangible resources) (intangible resources) accounted for 20%, today the situation is qualitatively different. Rather, the intangible resources in 1999 reached 80% of total assets in the largest number of companies and organizations in the U.S., while the share of capital resources and tangible assets reduced to 20%, a trend also present in other knowledge-based economies. The share of new knowledge, contained in technologies, equipment and production organization in the developed countries amounts for 70% to 85% of gross national production (Kulić, 2012).

Securing of high-quality work force, which is ready and able to respond to the demands of modern technologies on one side and to conditions of market economy on the other demands a continuation of the educational reform on all levels. It is also necessary to work on strengthening of the realization that a reform is a constant process in all participants in the educational process and society as a whole and that the responses of the educational system to the demands of economy must be swift and efficient. In that sense, one of the primary tasks for the Republic of Serbia is the continuation of the started processes of modernization and education system reform and their coordination with the needs of the market economy. As this process is complex, long-term and gradual, it cannot be accomplished by the Ministry of Education alone, nor by educational institutions (vocational schools, vocational faculties and universities), but all parties of interests who show their needs in the educational system must be involved – employers, companies, unions, employment bureaus, chambers, employer unions and state management on all levels.

The task of the reform is to create an environment which will allow innovative thinking and solve problems of each individual located in the Republic of Serbia, with a goal of transforming their own ideas into innovation and contribute to the developmental components of our country. In this regard, special attention must be paid to the issues of establishing a system of social partnership between the world of education and the world of work, which is of particular importance to vocational education. Since this segment of the education system a significant number of teachers practice teaching without preparation, which implies a lack of minimum pedagogical-psychological and methodological knowledge and competencies, particular attention must be paid to issues of continuous professional development of teachers.

Socio-economic context and the importance of vocational education

Among other things, the process of transition which from the late 20th and early 21st century engulfed our society meant posing many important questions related to the problems of modernization and democratization, transition to a market economy, the creation of a “knowledge society”, labour mobility, suppression of unemployment and many other questions. In the context of these changes, literature has particularly singled out the importance of reforming the existing and establishing a new and more effective educational system, which would successfully respond to the growing and complex demands of modern society.

In circumstances which insist on high qualification employees, which include mastery of a relatively wide array of knowledge on science, education development strategy must adapt to the new challenges that bring prosperity and seek adequately educated and trained individuals and the nation as a whole. For these reasons, the overall development of education should become a priority of the state which, among other things, means that significantly greater government investments should happen in the education system, as well as the establishment of strategic planning for the development of the education system to meet the needs of modern society and a market economy.

Since vocational education is becoming an important factor and one of the key figures of the economic development of society, particular attention must be given to the reform and modernization of this segment of the educational system. Today, it is rightly said that in terms of the built efficient system of social partnership and joint action of all stakeholders, the vocational education and training for creating experts will be able to engage in a heated domestic and international competition in all areas (MPS RS, 2005). Highly trained and competent staff, which might occur as a result of the existence of a modern and efficient system of education, would represent an important social resource and an essential precondition for any technological, socio-economic and individual development.

Secondary education for qualified personnel becomes an important link in the advancement of modern society and is confirmed by contemporary European practice which confirmed that the presence of a large number of staff in some of these countries provides a rapid economic progress of society as a whole. The already mentioned practice is typical for those educational systems through which students develop the necessary professional vocational education competence and acquire knowledge that can effectively be applied in their everyday work.

The vocational education in Germany is often referred to as an example of “good practice” in modern literature. The system in this country is designed in such a way that companies give a significant contribution to the financing of vocational education and it is therefore understandable that they have the right to co-decision in all segments –starting from policy matters, the decrees on vocations, to the ways of the examinations. This way, the state gives up some of its powers and thus shifts responsibility on those who perform professional education, as well as on those who “buy” labour. However, control mechanisms remain in the jurisdiction of the state, whose duty it is to control the behaviour of all participants in the entire process, according to agreed rules.

The vocational education in Germany, despite some criticism for its inability to keep pace with economic and social conditions which are rapidly changing, as well as with the problems of the labour market especially pronounced in the eastern part of the country after the reunification of the country, according to some authors (Deissinger, 2004) today, though, is a representative element of the German education system. It is generally assumed that the German dual system, which is “work-based”, has given a lot of good results in that country. It is, in fact, a well-designed and well-organized system of vocational education which represents an important factor in the economic development of this country. It is not surprising that the German concept of education has been applied with some modifications in other countries which have German as a language throughout education (Austria, Belgium, the Netherlands, Switzerland, etc.).

Much attention has been paid to vocational education reform issues in the works of contemporary Russian authors. Based on the understanding of the authors we can conclude that although the scientific community in Russia shows some dissatisfaction concerning the progress and results of reform approach towards the problems of vocational education, these changes have certainly contributed to the establishment of a comprehensive and efficient system of education. “These changes show that the system of education in Russia, due to its flexibility, democracy, the state and the social character of management, as well as openness to educational innovation, transformed to a degree that enables it to monitor and respond to rapid changes in Russian society and economy“ (Kulić, 2007).

Analysis, however, shows that in most transition countries vocational education system, however, does not sufficiently meet the requirements of modern market economy. Therefore, in almost all analyses, secondary education in the countries in transition, points out that the centralized and rigidly controlled system does not truly meet the needs of children and youth. Thus, the centralized form of organization of the vocational education system caused a lack of connection between the offers of vocational education and regional and local needs of the economy and society.

Today’s practice shows that the obsolete (centralized) system of vocational education is characterized by a lack of flexibility to adapt to economic and social-politic changes and that it is not oriented to the dynamic labour market which is based on competition. Also, it can be noticed that school, especially on secondary level, does not pay the attention that is needed to be paid to further training and modernization of knowledge of their students so that education does not meet, in sufficient measure, the needs of a work place. Teaching plans and educational profiles are made without consulting the needs of the economy, while teachers, by rule, do not possess the adequate methodological-didactical knowledge and skills.

Pointing to the fact that students of vocational schools have certain knowledge, but that due to new technologies, new methods of work and new knowledge, their already existing knowledge is out of date, and some authors (Savićević, 2000) rightly point out that schools cannot remain passive in such circumstances, or they will be forced to work together with organizations in order to thoroughly examine the nature and content of work, as well as the emergence and disappearance of many professions.

On the other hands, the intensity of changes which characterize the modern economy, point out to the need that the students adopt, during their vocational education, apart from vocational, a whole spectre of general competencies which would enable them to successfully adapt themselves to new work and professional environments. Young generation which is educated today enters the world which passes through changes in all of its spheres – economic, cultural, political, scientific, and technological sphere and in social relations. In those changes education is given one of the key roles and becomes a factor of unity and integration within society.

In order to adequately respond to these new demands education should provide the following: required cognitive and theoretical knowledge in order to facilitate the acquisition of expert (professional) skills which are becoming more sophisticated, given the technological changes in the labour process, broad competencies needed in modern production and in the sphere of services, not only for the current production, but for continuous lifelong learning and training employees, and such vocational training that will support and strengthen self-productivity (Despotović et al., 2002).

From the eighties of the 20th century - in defining vocational education -much of the attention is increasingly focused on the individual and the vocational education's social consequences, and the acquisition of knowledge, skills and competences that provide employment, which is taken as the ultimate goal of vocational education and key criteria in its definition. For these reasons, the primary goal of education in developed countries is becoming employed and employment itself (Despotović, 2010). However, since the 90s employment, as a primary goal of vocational education, is relativized and, at the same time, as one of the basic goals, employability and career development often stand out.

But despite the constant pointing to the importance and significance of vocational education, practice shows that the system of education in our country faces many problems and challenges of modern society. In recent decades, the system of vocational education in the Republic of Serbia is subjected to constant criticism by experts because it does not provide the skills to students which they will need when they enter the labour market. After graduating from vocational school students are usually not able to think critically, nor are they able to solve any practical problems they might encounter during work. Therefore, the system should be adjusted in such a way that the contents of education is changed and focused more on practical skills, and the students should get the competencies which will suit the modern demands of the labour market.

On the other hand, the assumption is that the modernization of vocational education and training, which would make this segment of the education system more cost-effective and efficient, would contribute to the economic recovery of the country and provide support for future European integration in our society. In this regard, special attention must be paid to the problems of harmonization of vocational education with the changes and demands of the labour market, the establishment of mechanisms for the motivation of the teaching staff in further education and training, as well as issues of competence and qualifications in vocational education.

The concept of competence and qualifications in vocational education

Understanding what human potential one of the most important prerequisites for the overall development of society and an essential factor for advantage in the labour market, contributes to intensifying discussions on the acquisition of competencies in the educational process. Education focused on the development of competencies (competency based education) developed during the Industrial Revolution, when education was instrumental in value and becomes increasingly subject to the laws of economic growth, economic efficiency and increasing productivity of the employees.

Since the response to the challenges of modern society sees the ultimate goal of education in moving from knowledge to competency, current literature is pressing efforts to determine the competence concept and defining a new way. In this sense, the existence of a large number of different actors interested in the educational process and the definition of the problems of defining the concept of competence is evident, such as various professional associations, educational institutions, businesses, and so on.

In an attempt to define this term, Andrejev (2006) points out that competence usually involves some integrated ability to solve practical problems that arise in various spheres of life. This ability, of course, assumes the presence of knowledge, but as a reasonable point of view of this author, it is not necessary to have knowledge as such but to master certain individual characteristics and to be able to find and select required solutions at any moment.

The International Committee on Standards of Training and teaching (The International Board of Standards for Training, Performance and Instruction) defines competency, in turn, as an integrated set of skills, knowledge and attitudes that enable the individual to effectively perform activities of a given occupation or function in accordance with the expected standard (Spector et al., 2006).

Since particular attention is paid to the issues of qualifications and competence in the works of contemporary Russian authors, some authors (Zeer, 2003) rightly point out that the Russian pedagogical literature substantially enriched the term “key qualifications” which originated in western pedagogical literature. In Russian understanding of vocational education, for which a majority of Russian authors primarily use the term professional, the emphasis is on the preparation of specialists of wide profile, which assumes the integration of several professions. The idea of large-profile specialists is contained in need of modern society for professionals who are able to easily adapt to the modern requirements of production and, thereby, possess the knowledge and skills necessary for a wide range of professions, in order to ensure occupational mobility and international competitiveness.

Analysing the perceptions of Russian authors, Kulić, 2008, points out that authors consider “professional education that develops character” as a paradigm for the 21st century and cannot be fully understood outside the essentially complex concepts such as “key competencies”, “qualified”, “competence”, “important professional characteristics”, etc.

Key competences represent a cross-cultural and interdisciplinary knowledge, skills and abilities necessary for adaptation and productive activity in various professional communities, and they have multifunctional character. The famous Russian author Simonenko (СИМОНЕНКО, ed., 2006) thinks that the core competencies involve intercultural and interdisciplinary knowledge, skills and habits necessary to adapt and productive work in various professional communities. The author points out that this type of competence assumes universality, social and professional mobility of professionals and enables successful adaptation to different social and professional communities.

Achieved key competencies can be used for reaching various professional tasks and represent a possibility for personal fulfilment in life, work and learning of every individual. Key competencies, which an individual achieves at the end of vocational education, represent transferable, multifunctional package of knowledge, skills and abilities which would enable them to achieve personal fulfilment, development, professional mobility and employment (European Commission, 2003).

Pointing out that the key competencies define universality, social and professional mobility expertise and flexibility in adapting to different social and professional relationships, some Russian authors (Сластѣнин, 2006) also talk about professional (vocational) competence, which is seen as one of the stages (steps) in the development of professionalism. Under vocational competencies these authors, apart from functional literacy, professional qualifications and personality culture, put attainment of certain level of employees' vocational education, their knowledge, abilities and skills, which are necessary for performing of certain jobs.

In contemporary psychology and adult pedagogy, in addition to the key issues and professional competence, great attention is paid to issues of key skills and occupational standards. Qualifications, in the broadest sense, can be defined as formal statements of competence or competency standards relevant to work and access to employment, professional development and advancement in the work. Therefore, between competence and competency standards, on the one hand and qualifications, on the other hand, can not equate, for each competency and qualification is not the same. Qualifications, in fact, are a socially recognized competence.

As for the concept of key qualifications, special attention is paid to the 80-ies of the last century in Germany. The initiative came from the pedagogical experts associated with the learning centres to prepare specialists in large industrial enterprises and companies (Dresden-Bank, Mercedes, Opel, Siemens, Volkswagen, etc.). In this regard, began the preparation of new projects oriented to the development of key skills, whose work involved German educators and psychologists (R. Bader, K. Beiderwiden, Borretty R., U. Klein, L. Reetz, A. Schelten, J. Zebeck, et al.). This researches formed the basis for the preparation of key qualifications catalogue, which includes: general education knowledge, skills and habits of a wide profile: the culture of speech, foreign languages, etc., standard professional knowledge and skills, cognitive skills - the ability to transfer knowledge and skills from one form of professional activity into other activities, prob-

lem-solving abilities and others, psychomotor skills, personal qualities: responsibility, self-reliance, optimism, motivation, etc., and social skills: cooperation, readiness for cooperation, communication, tolerance, fairness (Zeer, 2003).

Based on the analysis of these authors, it can be concluded that in the present series of works - the conceptual competency coordinate approach is indicated quite clearly and that its main intention is expressed, which is reflected in the effort to strengthen the practical orientation of education. It is, in fact, the construction of a new type of educational standards, in which the final requirements to graduate should be that students of vocational schools should express themselves in the form of a summary of competence, as well as the translation of basic educational standards with knowledge of language to language competence.

The reform of vocational education courses in contemporary social development

Socio-economic and political changes in contemporary European societies, especially in Southeast Europe, which are taking place in recent decades have substantially influence the changes in education, in the way that they are changing it radically. Proceeding from this, most countries strive to transform their educational systems, to make them more flexible and adaptable to the new demands of the economy and society. In those circumstances, educational reforms have a wide array and span from reforms of institutional structure and curriculum (program), all the way to education and teachers' status (Kulić, 2007).

Analyses show that in this period of the development of European education it is receiving new impetus and direction to concentrate specifically on professional development and training. The cornerstone of these changes set the document *White Paper on Education* (1996.), which marked the beginning of practical reforms in the system of vocational education and training in the European Union (Despotović et al., 2002). The emergence of this document is related to the results of the analysis of the economic situation in Europe, which showed that the continent lags behind compared to the others, which is, for the most part, caused by the lack of skilled labour and non-compliance between educational supply and the actual needs of its market economy.

Also, in November 2002 in Copenhagen, the Ministers responsible for vocational education of EU Member States, EFTA and EEA and candidate countries for EU membership, supported the *resolution on the promotion of cooperation in vocational education and training*, as well as a strategy for improving the performance, quality and attractiveness of vocational education (Copenhagen Declaration, 2002).

The need for the creation of new models of education, were caused by the intense social, economic and technological changes which have taken place in recent decades. Mentioned needs arise not only from a number of weaknesses in the present but also the knowledge of the relationship of this segment of the educational system with the labour market and economic growth and development of society. For these reasons, most countries point out Vocational Education as the greatest importance and seek to modernize it in

line with the current demands of society and market economy. Reform of this part of the education system is an important prerequisite to mitigate the socio-economic contradictions and integration in European and global economy's economical flows.

In accordance with the requirements above, the Ministry of Education and Sports of the Republic of Serbia in 2001, began the preparations for the reform of vocational education. In this context, an analysis of the existing system of vocational education, which served as the basis for the preparation of the strategic framework for the reform of vocational education adopted by the Ministry in 2002.

The reform processes that started in 2001 and 2002 were continued in 2003, by defining priorities and key areas of operation. These processes are accompanied by the adoption of a number of key documents governing the area of vocational education and training in this period. Also in this period numerous hands-on activities to modernize vocational education in our country were initiated. As part of the reform of vocational education which is implemented in Serbia since the specified period and which is up to date, a number of schools have introduced new - experimental profiles that incorporate practices, skills and the modern educational approach. The need for new profiles was produced through analyses of market economy's state which show that a significant number of existing profiles does not match the needs of the modern economy, which represents one of important reasons of unemployment in Serbian society.

In cooperation with the Ministry of Education and Sports of the Republic of Serbia and the German Organization for Technical Cooperation (GTZ), and with the help of subordinate institutions of secondary education in Serbia since 2003 the evolving concept of the politics of education tailored to changed demands of the labour market. In working directly with students considerable attention has been devoted to practical exercises, while for teachers, especially for experts without professional pedagogical education, the need for special pedagogical training.

Analyses related to monitoring the employability of students who have completed such programs, generally show good results. Educational programs are designed in a way to enable students to acquire functional and useful knowledge, and that they are effectively adapted to lifelong learning. The new educational profiles are designed taking into account the demands of the labour market and in line with the current needs of the Serbian economy, which allows students to get easy jobs.

Unfortunately, this practice is now restricted to a relatively small number of schools and profiles, while the majority remains unreformed. It is obvious that our society today lacks the capacity necessary for the consistent implementation of the reform of vocational education. Today many of the demands for reform but reformed educational segment suggest that the reform has not gone very far. Practice shows that even though we are in the education reform started from similar positions, the fact is that today, it is significantly behind compared to most countries in the region.

Concluding remarks

Therefore, the need for reform of vocational education arise not only from a number of weaknesses in the present but also the knowledge of the relationship of this segment of the educational system with the labour market and the economic prospects of different regions and countries. For this reason, in most countries, it is this part of the education system that is of greatest importance, and it is trying to revitalize and modernize in line with the current demands of society and market economy.

The reform of this part of education, especially in transition countries, represents an important pre-condition for damping of social-economic contradictions and inclusion in European and world economic flows. The analyses' result, however, show that despite general consensus on the importance of vocational education, as well as the fact that this segment is given the biggest priority, the educational system in the Republic of Serbia still faces many problems and challenges posed by modern society.

For this reason today it is necessary to continue work on revitalization and modernization of the established educational system in our country. In that sense it is necessary to stress the creation of new, more flexible and more open educational system in which vocational education will take a qualitatively different places and role. In order to enable the young to acquire functional knowledge and the development of professional competencies needed for work, in the system of vocational education apart from schools as inevitable institution place should be found for enterprises and other social actors which are interested in the outcome of vocational education.

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SREDNJE STRUČNO OBRAZOVANJE U FUNKCIJI EKONOMSKOG RASTA I RAZVOJA DRUŠTVA

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Apstrakt

Ubrzane društveno-političke i ekonomske promene, sa kojima se evropska društva tokom poslednjih nekoliko decenija suočavaju, bitno utiču na promene u obrazovanju i ističu zahteve za reformom obrazovnih sistema i njihovim prilagođavanjem novim potrebama privrede i društva. Stoga se u savremenoj stručnoj literaturi sve više pažnje posvećuje pitanjima reformskih procesa koji se tiču područja srednjeg stručnog obrazovanja. Takva praksa je uslovljena činjenicom da modernizacija ovog važnog segmenta obrazovnog sistema, s obzirom na njegovu direktnu povezanost sa privredom i svetom rada, predstavlja bitnu pretpostavku ukupnog društvenog i ekonomskog razvoja svake zemlje.

Iz pomenutih razloga, u radu se bavimo problemima reforme sistema stručnog obrazovanja u Republici Srbiji, i pritom stručno obrazovanje posmatramo u kontekstu ekonomskog rasta i razvoja društva. Cilj rada je da ukaže na značaj ekonomske vrednosti obrazovanja kao i na značaj investicija u ljudski kapital. Teorijska elaboracija i postavljeni zadaci nametnuli su potrebu da u radu koristimo deskriptivnu, komparativno-istorijsku i analitičko-sintetičku metodu, kao i analizu sadržaja. Rezultati analize, međutim, pokazuju da iako ekonomska vrednosti obrazovanja danas nije nimalo sporna, sistem stručnog obrazovanja u našoj zemlji se i dalje suočava sa brojnim problemima i izazovima savremenog društva.

Ključne reči: srednje stručno obrazovanje, investiranje u znanje, obrazovanje, razvoj ljudskog kapitala, ekonomska vrednost obrazovanja.

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