

The focal points of the education policy in the context of strategic documents in the conditions of the Slovak republic

Júlia Petrovičová¹

¹ Institute of Political Sciences, Faculty of Philosophy, University of Prešov; Ul. 17.novembra 1, 080 78 Prešov; julia.petrovicova@gmail.com

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Abstract At the beginning of my paper I would like to briefly introduce the main difference between the two key terms that will be fundamental for further depicting of the topic and their relation. In addition to that, I will provide an insight into the issue through explanation of framework, the measures which have already been carried out to improve the state of the Education System together with the current projects aimed to continue in the efforts to introduce a better and quality version of the Education System in Slovakia. In the end, I will provide my personal view on the issue and introduce the pending questions that still should be answered for we could conclude that the transformation of the Education System progressed successfully.

Keywords integration, inclusion, education policy, national project

1. INTRODUCTION

When it comes to the Slovak Education System, the basic strategy document is called the National Programme for Development of Education. Its primary proposal was drawn up by the authorities of the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic on the basis of their commitment to create a long-term concept on the education and training in the context of the Government's Action Plan. The concept was to modify the aims and objectives in the area of education and training for the next 10 years. It should impact every level of the Education System in the country starting with the pre-primary education and ending with the lifelong learning. The Programme primarily stemmed from the views of the Finnish experts formed as a qualitative vision of the development of the Education and Training System included in the "Learning Slovakia" Document.

The Report on the Situation of Slovak Education 2013 revealed and confirmed an urgent need for system changes in the Education System. The report offered an analysis of the current state of regional and higher education in the country. It was based on the statistic data provided by the Institute of Information and Forecasts of Education and International Studies or comparisons and was drawn up as a middle-term analysis for the period of 2013-2020.

2. INTEGRATION AND INCLUSION

In relation to the purpose and objectives of the Programme, which are to improve the quality and modernization of the Education and Training System and to expand access to the quality education, two key concepts come into the fore - integration and inclusion.

To understand the concept of inclusion, which is often confused with the concept of integration, it is necessary to understand that this is a broader concept of the principle of equality in access to the education. The issue of inclusive education was first discussed in 1994 at the international conference in Salamanca. This conference's primarily aim focused on the children with various degrees of disabilities. However, it resulted into a statement which fundamentally improved the philosophy of education that was to impact all the children, with and without disabilities. It defined an inclusive school as a *school where all children learnt together whenever possible, regardless of the differences and difficulties they had*. Education process, curricula, organizational structures had to be adapted to the diverse needs of each child. (The Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education, 1994)

The relation between individual terms was stated by Kocúrová et al (2012, pg. 17) as follows:

Integration	Inclusion
Focus on the needs of the pupils with special education needs	Focus on the needs of all pupils
Expertise of specialists (special tutor, clinical psychologist, pedopsychiatrist, etc.)	Expertise of teachers
Special intervention	Proper education for all
Benefit for the integrated pupil	Benefit for all pupils
Partial change of the environment and ambience	A complete change of school
Focus on the pupil with disabilities	Focus on the group and school
Special study schedule for pupils with disabilities	Overall teacher's strategy
Assessment of the student/pupil by a qualified expert	Assessment by teacher; focus on the educational factors

Table 1: The relation between integration and inclusion (note: modified by the author)

On the basis of the international framework defining the objectives of education indicated as “the Europe 2020 Strategy”, the Member States of the European Union are bound to meet the set values of the six indicators linked to the area of education. The analysis of the current state of complying with the target values (see Table 2) revealed that the Education System of the Slovak Republic showed signs of insufficient inclusion, mainly due to:

- Low participation rate of children (aged 4 years and over) in pre-primary education
- A high rate of the 15 - year-old students with insufficient results (according to the results from the PISA skills testing)
- Low participation of adults in lifelong learning
- Increasing rate of young people aged 18 - 24 with premature school termination

The two remaining indicators which have been successfully met so far are:

- The share of under and postgraduate citizens aged 30 - 34
- The employment rate of fresh graduates aged 20 - 34 (in the reference period of 1 to 3 years after graduation)

Indicator	2010 (The initial state in Slovakia in %)	2017 (The current state in Slovakia in %)	2020 (The value set by the EU in %)
People with premature school termination	4.7	9.3	10
The share of the 15 - year-old students with insufficient results	21	30.7	15
Participation of children in pre-primary education	76.9	76.5	95
Adult participation in lifelong learning	3.1	3.4	15
The rate of under and postgraduate citizens	22.1	34.4	40
The employment rate of the recent graduates	69.5	81.3	82

Table 2: Comparison of the initial and current values of the complying with the indicators of the Europe 2020 Strategy in the field of education in Slovakia (Source: National Programme for Education Development)

3. THE IMPLEMENTATION OF NATIONAL PROJECTS

The focal point for setting and conceptualizing of the Education Policy and the Employment Policy, which is closely linked to this concept, is a prerequisite for the development of the labour market. Several prognoses have been continuously carried out in the area of human resources in the Slovak Republic. Some of them are:

- The labour market demand prognosis investigating the demand for particular university educational programmes by the employees (within the National Project “Universities as Engines of the Knowledge-based Society Development”)
- Monitoring and forecast of the market needs in regard to the adult lifelong learning. They included a quantitative definition of the types of job vacancies; a qualitative description of the content of the qualifications required by the labour market; a sectoral and regional specification of quantification of labour market needs; and a specification by the stage of education

(within the National Project “Further Education and Consultancy for Adults as an Instrument for Better Employability in Labour Market”)

- Anticipating the needs of the Slovak labour market in the medium term horizon by 2025 with the support of the APVV

At present, there has been done the prediction of the labour market by means of the National Project “Forecasting of Developments of Labour Market Needs in SR II”. As part of this project, the following documents were drawn up:

- A comprehensive analysis of employment,
- The annual analyses of employment and employability rates of the secondary-school and university graduates on the labour market in the individual regions at NUTS 2 level and selected clusters of regions, both in terms of the wage evaluation; in terms of abundance in the register of the labour offices; and integral indicator,
- The short-term and medium-term prognosis of labour market developments in the area of the expected future needs of employees, unemployment, the number of graduates, the number of vacancies and the number of self-employed classified by job and region,
- The quantification of short and medium-term labour market mismatch and the consequent recommendations resulting from the employers' qualification requirements for the workforce.

The above-mentioned analysis of labour market needs was systematically carried out in the past by means of the National Project “Forecasting of Developments of Labour Market Needs in the Slovak Republic I”. However, failure in informing the general public and projecting the outcomes in practice resulted in the need to extract and re-utilize the processed statistical information. The Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family of the Slovak Republic currently provides the general public with the results of the realized analyses/forecasts, e.g. when choosing a profession, in the form of a website - www.trendyprace.sk.

In order to take strategic decisions in the field of education and training for the labour market, the prospective and non-prospective job opportunities, quantified labour market disparities, development trends and structural changes in employment in the individual regions should be identified via this national project. The data sources of these analyses are:

- The Database of Pupils and Students (information collected by the Centre for Scientific and Technical Information)
- The Database of Unemployed Persons registered at the offices of Labour, Social Affairs and Family (jobseekers)
- The EUROSTAT Database administrated by the Statistical Office of the European Union
- The Database SLOVSTAT or DATAcube containing demographic, company, sectoral or macroeconomic indicators collected by the Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic
- The Database of Macroeconomic Forecasts used to predict the expansion of the national economy and individual sectors administrated by the Institute of Financial Policy under the Ministry of Finance of the Slovak Republic
- The Business Register - a database of self-employed workers and sole traders administrated by the Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic
- Field data collection in the form of controlled face-to-face interviews in the enterprises with a significant position in the region and in a combined form (through the face-to-face interviews and electronic data collection) done in the case of 18,500 secondary school and university students

- The Labour Cost Information System and Salary Information System; the databases contain data on employee evaluation classified by occupation, sex, age, education, qualifications, etc.
- The Information Full Labour Costs System
- The Information System related to the working conditions and costs of corporate social policy
- The Information System related to the jobs for sole traders
- The Integrated System of Typal Positions; a database of registered job vacancies. Its source is the internet portal istp.sk and the coordinator is the Centre of Labour, Social Affairs and Family.

While the forecasts made in the 2007-2013 period predicted mainly the labour market requirements with a view to assisting the self-governing regions in approving the structure of education and vocational study programmes (it was solely aimed to create a 'tool' for the local and regional authorities to help them with the decision-making process regarding the education of the secondary school students), the outcome of forecasting in the 2014-2020 period was re-utilised through the electronic tool www.trendyprace.sk to the general public.

However, it is more or less a topic for extensive discussion to what extent the educational institutions themselves or the authorities will take the forecasted results into account, such as in the abolition process of the currently unattractive study programmes; how the results will affect the school selection process, and whether the dissemination of information will have a positive impact on the workforce structure in 10 or more years.

Apart from the partial survey carried out at the turn of 2018 and 2019 on a sample of 18 500 secondary school and university students concerning exclusively the respondents' preferences, it cannot be concluded that the qualitative aspect of the provided education was taken into account when determining the labour market trends, even if this aspect is essential when defining the direction and development of education policy.

The Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport and the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family should cooperate together as two main actors in the Education Policy making process. However, there is currently a single discussion about the way of projecting the information provided primarily by the labour market in the decisions taken on the direction of the Education System.

On 3 April 2019, the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs and Family signed a contract in the framework of creation of the National Project "Sector Innovations of the Effective Labour Market in the Slovak Republic". Its objective is to obtain a comprehensive professional and methodological and technical coordination of the development and innovation of the monitoring system and anticipation of the labour market needs in the Slovak Republic.

This includes ensuring the balance between the demand and supply sides of the labour market, including the innovation management processes in identifying or anticipating the needs for job activities in the labour market by sectors and IS NSP. Moreover, it should improve labour market access, staff and company adaptability by means of better identification of the sectoral need for skills in the labour market and the demand for skilled workforce with the necessary expert knowledge, skills and abilities related to the establishing and management roles of the Alliance to the sector council, executive roles of the sectoral councils including assessment of their functionality and efficiency by the Alliance.

The project is linked to the National projects "National System of Occupations I, II and III" in accordance with the provision of § 35a (2) of Act no. 5/2004 Coll. on Employment Services and amending and supplementing certain acts, as amended. Implementation of the project is coordinated by the Ministry through the Alliance of Sectoral Councils pursuant to Section 35b of the Employment Services Act. The established Information System of the National System of Occupations (NSP - www.sustavapovolani.sk) was used for this purpose.

By creating new and innovated National Employment Standards, the Improved NSP Information System aims to create better identification of the employers' demand for skilled workforce in accordance with the innovative labour market trends. The results of the project should affect employers, job seekers, labour offices, as well as the educational sphere and the students who are to decide on the vocational training throughout the Slovak Republic.

There should be created a better identification of the demand for skilled workforce that would support the adaptation of workers, enterprises and entrepreneurs to the changes in the labour market. In this respect, it should particularly focus on providing new types of occupations, descriptions of skills for the progressive sources of employment growth coming into the sectoral policies and related to the climate change, economic performance and the impact of digitization and automation. A more in-depth identification of the needs of the professional knowledge and skills of each job should contribute to better assessment of the opportunities for people to find themselves a suitable job in the labour market and to improve the adaptability of employees and enterprises to the changed conditions.

4. CONCLUSION

To put it simply, the state carries out the forecasting of the labour market development in terms of number and structure of jobs, and also in terms of qualitative or content side (employee requirements, qualifications, skills) of the job.

However, the question of methodology of data collection and processing remains to be considered. Will the state institutions (for research and forecasting), such as the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic, Slovak Academy of Sciences, Agency for Science and Research, or Institute for Work and Family Research, also be involved in the process?

Will the obstacles to cooperation between the central state administration authorities - the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family - and the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport be finally overcome? Can we achieve the prerequisites for the Slovak education system to become inclusive in ten years?

We would argue that the current state of the Education Policy, is directed towards the segregation instead of integration. Establishing the diagnosis and labelling children lead to creation of groups of students and pupils with various disadvantages. Yet, the system cannot subsequently integrate such children.

Following the development predictions, I can conclude that the "competent authorities" know what the Education System needs in addition to the financial support. It is something that cannot be changed by decision of the National Council of the Slovak Republic or included in the development forecast. I'm talking about social will. A Slovak citizen, parent, teacher still has prejudices against otherness ingrained and this is the main barrier to building the Education System as inclusive.

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