

HIGHER EDUCATION STRATEGY FOR SMART GROWTH IN THE REPUBLIC OF SERBIA

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Abstract

The aim of the paper is to critically examine the status of higher education in the Republic of Serbia, as well as to emphasize the importance of the implementation of the new Strategy of higher (academic) system development in Serbia by 2020. The subject of the research is higher education in a lifelong learning perspective as an essential component in the achievement of sustainable development, capable enough to become a competent part of the European Higher Education Area. The main challenge facing the educational system in Serbia is to build a modern educational model that will contribute to the development of the individual in the working environment and other life situations. Substantial differences in the level of regional development in Serbia, high unemployment rates and depopulation trends suggest that the development of Serbia must be based on advancing the creative and productive qualities of human resources throughout their life. The key hypothesis this paper is built upon, is that the current reform of the educational system at all levels, especially the higher education, did not contribute to generating innovations in support of sustainable development, as well as the transfer of knowledge aimed at overcoming critical problems and meeting future challenges, despite the introduced positive changes. In the paper, the following research methods were used: method of analysis and synthesis, comparative method, descriptive method, verification method and SWOT analysis along with the theoretical and empirical approach. Primary and secondary research and quantitative and qualitative analysis made it possible to analyze the following issues by using the aforementioned scientific research toolkit: the current situation of higher education in the Republic of Serbia, necessary changes in the system of higher education and the problems related to an increasing discrepancy between the knowledge acquired through higher education and the knowledge required in the professional life. In conclusion, the paper points out that the developmental orientation of higher education in the Republic of Serbia is directed towards the compliance with EHEA and ERA, improvement of educational quality and the use of learning outcomes as a tool to facilitate the dialogue between higher education institutions, students and employers in the process of adjustment of curricula to labor market demands, which would lead to increase of employability of university graduates.

Keywords: *higher education, knowledge, strategy, competitiveness, smart growth*