

Project summary

Title: Identifying factors of Low Efficiency of Studying in Higher Education in Serbia

Abstract

The project focuses on identifying factors that contribute to low efficiency of studying in higher education in Serbia. Low efficiency of studying, illustrated with approx. 45% of drop out rate and prolongation of time to completion was one of the key arguments for reforming higher education in Serbia in line with the Bologna Process. However, having in mind the previous research on stratification of higher education in Serbia, as well as the research literature suggesting that a complex set of factors contributes to low efficiency, the project focuses on both the structure, processes and culture in higher education, as well as student's socio-economic background, personal characteristics etc.

The project uses both quantitative and qualitative methods. The first phase of the project consists of surveying students and teachers from 5 different fields in 4 universities in Serbia, on issues related to their higher education experience, opinions and perceptions on efficiency in higher education as well as demographic and personal data. This phase was followed by a set of 20 semi-structured in-depth interviews, with students and teachers from 2 fields at the University of Belgrade. The interviews allow for analysis of changes in power relations between different higher education actors, perceptions and expectations from the reform of higher education, as well as reflections on personal experience. In both phases, both pre-Bologna and Bologna students were involved.

The project results are organised in a similar manner: the first output is an article primarily focusing on qualitative data, while the second output (currently worked on) is primarily focusing on quantitative data, and involves statistical modelling of access to and progression through higher education.

The key conclusions presented in the first paper are:

- Factors contributing to low efficiency can be seen as:
 - o External to higher education – personal characteristics, socio-economic background, family dynamics, wider social context;
 - o Internal - rigid study structure, too high workload, alienation from the academic community.
- Many factors contributing to low efficiency of studying are the same for pre-Bologna and Bologna system of higher education, such as:
 - o too high workload, or
 - o financial hardship.
- There are shifts in terms of power relations between the actors involved – from students and teachers being the primary axis of symbolic conflict, the axis seems to shift towards students and teachers on one side and administrative staff and leadership on the other.

Key words: efficiency of studying, Bologna reforms, university, teachers, students, education, Serbia