

EFFICIENT MANAGEMENT OF EDUCATION AS A PUBLIC GOOD, THE CASE OF KOSOVO

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Abstract

The topic treated in this case is about the efficient management of education as a public good in the Republic of Kosovo and presents a very wide concept which is related with the manner of the state's mission as a form of a social organization. The public goods have special relevance in the normal development of the country. In recent years, can be noticed fast development and creation of financial sources, which lead to the need for efficient and equal use of the public goods and services. The paper treats the management of the public goods, basic functions of the public finances, and specifically the situation in the education sector in the Republic of Kosovo. The management of the public goods is treated in a way to see the benefits of public and private transactions, which do lower the social costs, while it also improves social welfare.

Keywords: efficient management; public goods; education; budget; globalization etc.

1. Introduction

Public goods

In all the fields of the human activity we are witnessing very dynamic developments, and a very high level of production forces in the global level. At the same time, there are very controversial social, economic crises grows, negative or positive impacts on the activity of the economic subjects between each other, which make the role of the state to act in the economy a substantial and necessary.

The allocation of the economic sources in a society can be realized through the market, or other social activities in implementing specific economic and budgetary policies, investments, and the public consumption, as well. From the above we can say that these economic sources can be distributed in efficient manner. The efficiency means improvement of the welfare of an economic subject without harming the welfare of the other one.

In conditions where the competition in a market, a market being completely liberal, where every product or good finds its buyer or seller, whereas in conditions when there is no possibility of creating power in the market, there is presence of a monopoly, in this case the efficiency of the economic sources of the society is questioned, which is known as the first theorem of welfare (Harvey, 2022, p.46).

From the past we can see and learn that the global economic development and the liberal market

can make possible the efficient distribution of the economic sources. In this case the intervention of the state is an alternative as a result of the two basic reasons:

- The failure of the markets, which is manifested in the power of the market and the monopoly, and the lack of the market in creating externalities and the public goods.
- Distributing the incomes.

As a result of the above mentioned for allocating the economic sources, the intervention of the state is necessary through the political instruments, like the fiscal policy, legal norms, which have impact in direct or indirect manner in redistributing the incomes and setting the Social Justice. This is known as the Second Theorem of the Welfare.

While the state uses instruments in realizing specific economic policy, the fiscal policy, monetary-credit policy, and the structural one, the main purpose is the economic welfare and the social welfare of its citizens, which is reflected on the relation between the general economic sources and the national out.

Methodology

The article has treated and analysed the efficient management of public goods in the Republic of Kosovo, starting with the presentation or the definition of public goods, state budgetary programs, and the education as very relevant public good, globalization and the challenges of Kosovo in relation to the competition and future challenges. There are reviewed the fundamental documents, laws, and other legislature in order to see the harmonization of the reforms/attempts in this crucial sector/system of the relatively newly established country, the Republic of Kosovo. There is used the analytical approach of the reforms in relation to the provision of public goods, documents or regulations and other standards set by the European Union for Kosovo, as a potential candidate country.

2. Budgetary programs and the public goods in Kosovo

The structural politics usually by every government contain the budgetary programs, which are oriented on the public goods, in the interest of all citizens, like the national defence, the continuous security, infrastructural investments, legal system, education, health, protection from fires, environmental protection, etc., for which activities in most of the cases there is no private market, which results that these things should and must be offered by the state.

In case that the state cannot offer the public good, then it must make possible the creation of the private market, like in the education section with the private education, private health, or the private security, which do fulfil the demand of the market, and increases the welfare of the citizens. Today, in Kosovo the distribution of the economic sources in the society, beside the market mechanism, is being achieved and realized through the governmental programs in infrastructural investments, investments in education, health, social insurance, unemployment insurance, and there are directly allocated funds that have impact on the macro-economic parameters, the increase of the aggregate demand in the market, and in the continuous improvement of the economic and social welfare.

In our case, in Kosovo, nevertheless that the private market is offering public goods or those are being offered and provided by the state, the problem remains in the efficient management of the public goods. All, with no exception, should and must face the efficiency.

The redistribution of the economic sources, which are under the management of the state, are

realized and implemented through the allocations of funds or known as public finances, from the state budget in accordance with the treasury rules, and then it undergoes the procedures of the public procurement, in the end the practical realization of projects or their final implementation. In the case of Kosovo, according to the data, 50.2% of the state budget undergoes the procedures of public procurement (Duli, 2008, p.17).

The efficient management of the public goods beside the correct budgetary planning, the efficient process of the public procurement, realizing the expenses from the central and the local treasure, would not be complete without the internal and external audit of the public expenses process. All these activities realized by the government should be called the visible hand of the state.

In case, there should be mentioned the character of the public goods in relation with the positive externalities, correct distribution of the incomes in the society, and the human ethics including those between the individuals, and the state-individual relations, which decreases the social cost of transactions.

Public goods in Kosovo

The public goods as part of the social welfare in the aspect of the offer mainly are obligations of the public sector. The maximization of the possibilities and the results are the purpose of the activities of the private sector, which as its main purpose has the social welfare, and its continuous increase.

The realization of the government programs for public goods like public security, national defence, education, health, general infrastructure, social care etc., with as much as possible lower cost, whereas on the other hand higher standards, represents the efficient management of public goods. The problems with the efficiency as a fundamental element of the social welfare in Kosovo should be seen by two aspects: first, the tax efficient policy, and second by the efficient management of public funds.

In the tax efficiency there are present some basic problems, like: insufficient rule of law, informal economy, tax evasion, too many taxes for some subjects, corruption, low performance of the Tax Administration Directory of Kosovo, etc.

In the efficient management of the public funds there are present several basic problems, like: public decision-making, budgetary planning, public procurement, project management, insufficient monitoring of public expenses, bad performance of efficiency management, public management ethics, etc.

All these impact in less public goods for the society, qualitatively or quantitatively, less social welfare, less foreign investments, less social equality, less collection of taxes by state institutions, etc.

In the case of Kosovo and the corruption as part of the public administration's work is that the people think and believe that in order to do something or get a document you should give a bribe or corrupt any employee or official regardless the violation of laws being committed, and on the other hand there prevails a desire to get rich by the people or persons working in these public institutions (Halili, 2011).

Most of the cases of corruption are related with the fragile system of the governance and the institutions that are part of the judiciary system in the Republic of Kosovo. There are several cases revealed by the investigative bodies and the police, but many of them remained unpunished as a result of the corrupted judiciary system.

The legal and judicial basis against the corruption in Kosovo is built to fight this negative

phenomenon, but Kosovo is relatively a new constituted state, and it falls in the group of the developing countries, which are mostly characterized with the high level of corruption.

-Decision-making characteristics for the public goods - The decision-making process is a result of the circumstances in which is going the transition of Kosovo.

In the formal aspect the decisions of the government of the Republic of Kosovo derive from several working plans, like: Program of the Government, Macro-economic and fiscal frame, middle-term frame of expenses, etc.

As a result of the unclear decision-making process for beginning of major projects, and their manner of financing and the final cost, makes possible to have situation that will cost a lot much to the society.

The decision-making process in relation with the public funds should have an analysis, which contains problem identification, need for investments, previous evaluation and formulation, approval and finances, implementation, monitoring, performance evaluation, reporting, and audit of the specific investment (Milo, 2008, p.4).

In the case of Kosovo, these steps or measures are not considered, and that guarantees that the process of the public investments and its efficiency is going to fail and not reaching the efficient result of the management of the public funds.

As an example, we can mention the highway “Nation’s Road” and its efficiency in the economic aspect. This highway had a cost of nearly one billion euro, in circumstances when the country and the entire world were in a global economic crisis. During that time Kosovo’s GDP was less than 4 billion euro, on the other hand the country had difficulties in collecting the taxes i.e., filling the state budget, which is planned to finance the above-mentioned project or investment. In this case the economic subjects and the individuals had to pay the extra consummator tax or a reserved price, but there should have been an increase of the social welfare, so would have been much easier the construction of the highway.

In the time when this highway was built, the financial power of the Government was reduced as a result of the difference between the total incomes and the total expenses. We can mention the budgetary incomes for 2009, about 956 million euro, whereas the expenses were about 1094 million euro (Annual Bulletin 2010-2012).

This was an investment during the economic crisis but has contributed to the creation of the inter-Albanian market i.e., Albania and Kosovo, which could have and could be used for higher competition in the Western Balkans countries. Besides that, it will lower the transport cost in the relation Albania – Kosovo, respectively lower prices for the consummators of both countries.

3. Education as a public good

Since the education is a very relevant source for reforms in the public administration and changes in the society, and there are theories that the public education ensures and provides the human capital, which in the meantime revives and gains the trust in the current political system.

The technical technological progress as a relevant factor, as well, determines the economic grow and the social welfare, in the end is obliged to finance and support the education and research process. “The progress of knowledge and the efficiency are considered the main resources, and do emphasize the role in research, education and the training of the relevant resources in the economic grow” (Dornbusch, 2000, p.256). This is the reason why the education represents an important part in the budget of the country, no matter which political party or a government is in power and cannot be provided completely by the free market as a result of the efficiency and the social justice,

since not all the citizens can afford to educate their children in private schools. In the case of offering public goods, like the education, where the state is a producer and offers it, the social justice is in question in the aspect of equal possibilities to consume the public goods that are delivered by the education as an output, like: knowledge, culture, etc. for all the citizens. A typical example is the primary and the secondary education, which is compulsory and free. On the other, for the national defence there is no replacement by the private sector, for education and health, as public goods, the private providers are increasing the competition and the quality, which impact the social welfare, in the positive aspect.

In our case, in Kosovo, the expenses for the education system have been increased continuously. The manner of management of the public system in the education comparing to the private sector is creating the differences between these sectors. The performance level of the public education sector depends on two types of factors:

- The internal factors, like inoperative organization, performance evaluation, ineffective internal control, inefficient university bureaucracy, low communication between professors and students, lack of literature, lack of practical part in applying the theoretical part, etc.
- The external factors that influence the performance in the public education sector are insufficient funds provided by the government, education syllabuses that do not match the market needs, political interference or political influence on the university autonomy, insufficient communication of the academic society, nepotism and interference in the employment policy in universities, lack of Government support for talents, and inefficient external audit, as well.

In the relation to the development of the education in Kosovo, respectively the higher education, the number of students in the public education is increasing, whereas the private sector is not a real competition, at least for the moment, even that there have been some efforts. In the time of globalization, the permanent scientific-technological revolution, the knowledge is suffering the biggest part of the devaluations.

The first and the most relevant action that should be done by the government, is to monitor the performance of the private education sector, and the public sector, as well, in order to create equal conditions for all providers in the higher education in the country. As a democratic country, Kosovo is trying to provide “fair” competition and fighting the monopoly in this sector, with the principal goal to work on the interest of the students, as the ones that will carry the future social and economic development.

From the above written, we can say that the expenses per student in Kosovo are too low, as a result of which, there is presence on inefficient management in this sector i.e., this public good.

Of course, this is related with the local government units, municipalities, which manage with the primary and secondary education in Kosovo. The current financing of the primary and secondary education in Kosovo does not fulfil the needs of the schools for improving and implementing the policies/reforms. The same formula of financing is applied in all the schools, no matter the nature of need they have.

On average the public expenses in the pre-university education per student in 2019 was EUR 756. In 2019, the public expenses for the pre-university education calculated in the GDP percent were 3.51%. The public expenses for the pre-university education in 2019, as a percent of the total expenses by the Government were 11.6%, in 2018 was EUR 683, whereas in 2017 was EUR 610 (MESTI, 2019/20).

-Investments in the education infrastructure – in the recent years there have been realized several

investments in improving the infrastructure through buildings, renovations, extending the education institutions. On the other hand, there is no progress in the field of supplying the schools with technological means.

The inclusion of children in the preschool education

The fact that the preschool education is seen as the basis that determines the success of the pupils in their future development, this level of education has not been treated in the proper manner in Kosovo. This can be seen from the challenges with which the preschool education in Kosovo is facing, including inadequate distribution of the preschool institutions in the country, only 23 out of 34 municipalities in Kosovo have only one public kindergarten to the age of 6. The small number of public preschool institutions, only 44 public preschool institutions in the entire country, the lack of suitable infrastructure for the children's age, the lack of didactical materials, and the expenditures means, which are required for organizing the activities that enable learning via playing, etc.

In general, the children living in rural zones and the ones living in marginalized groups do not have access in the preschool education. On the other hand, the educators engaged in the rural zones have lower professional development comparing to those engaged in urban zones. There is also a very low budget planned for the preschool education, and it does not achieve any progress.

The inclusion of the children in the preschool education, especially those 0-5 is very low, and it presents a challenge. Even that there is some progress in the recent years, comparing with the other countries of the region, Kosovo remains in a very low level of participation of these children in the preschool education (0-5 years old). The challenges that Kosovo I am facing in this level of education are mainly related with the lack of infrastructure, finances, and ensuring quality of services offered by the preschool institutions.

In this direction, in increasing the inclusion of the preschool education children, the Ministry of Education of Kosovo together with various organizations, like Save the children, UNICEF, and other local organizations have organized different campaigns in order to increase the awareness of the parents and the relevance of the preschool education, its influence in the future academic development of the children.

Another challenge is the determination of the locations for new public kindergartens by the local authorities or many municipalities. The municipalities do not have urban places or locations for building new kindergarten. This is the case when many municipalities have lost their grants as a result of the lack of locations in accordance with the required criteria.

The inclusion of the children with special needs - The inclusion of the children with special needs is another challenge for the country. First, the data related with the inclusion of the children with special needs in the education system are very disputable for many years. This is as a result of the lack an evaluation of all the children with special needs, who are included in regular classes by professional teams in the municipalities. The latest data for the school year of 2019/20 show that 3,903 children with special needs were included in regular classes, whereas 349 in source centres.

According to Strategic Plan for Education in Kosovo during the year of 2021/22, 50% of the children with special needs in education will be included in the pre-university education. The lack of data is obstructing the real evaluation of this purpose.

Enrolling trends in pre-university education – The statistical data for 2019/20 show that the total number of students in the pre-university education in Kosovo was 352,696. The public

education system in Kosovo is organized in a net of 44 preschool institutions, 927 primary and lower secondary schools, and 123 higher secondary schools. Beside the public sector, there is the private sector which operates with 159 preschool institutions, and 28 primary and secondary schools.

There was noted a considered decrease of the number of the students in the period 2008-2019, respectively for 19.95% or 87,884 students. The decrease of the number of students is attributed to the demographic changes, especially to the migration and the low birth rate. Generally, in all municipalities the number of students has decreased, especially in those in the border and high regions of the country.

According to the statistics in education and the Ministry of Education in Kosovo, in 2008/09 there were 440,580 students, whereas in 2019/20 were 352,696 students.

Enrolling trends in the higher education - In 2020, the higher education system in Kosovo is composed by 32 accredited of higher institutions, 9 of which belong to the public institutions, and 23 to private institutions. With this number of higher education institutions, Kosovo continuous to be among the countries with the biggest number of higher education institutions per 1 million citizens.

On the other hand, the number of students enrolled in the last three years is decreasing. In the academic year 2019/20 in the higher education institutions are attending their studies 95,176 students, 58.3% of which are females (MESTI, 2019/20).

As mentioned above, the number of students is decreasing the last three years, whereas the public education institutions are emplaced by this. The accreditation agency might have impact on this, since it does determine the number of students to be enrolled in each faculty or university.

We can conclude that, both sectors, the public one and the private one, are doing or trying to do their best, but there are some external factors that do have influence on this public good, like the reason mentioned above, the accreditation agency determines the number of students to be enrolled, and of course the migration issue, as well.

The capacity for effective management of the education system- The development of the management capacity in the central, municipal and the school level is reflected directly in the management of the education system, the implementation of the financial and professional autonomy, and the decentralization requirements, as well.

In the case of Kosovo, the capacity of the municipal education directories in fulfilling their role re very limited, even that continuously there were added the responsibilities in setting mechanisms for monitoring, support and ensuring quality of education in municipal level.

As fact that worth to be mentioned, the salaries of the staff employed in these directories are lower comparing to those of the education staff in schools. This is one reason that makes these positions non-attractive. On the other hand, the directories do not have organizational structures to cover the various functions in schools. There is a lack of specialists for curricula, professional development of teachers of other specialists in different fields. All these show the lack of capacity and the small number of employees in the education municipal directories which make unable the effective work and their responsibilities.

Even that there are provided and offered trainings and other forms of staff development, including the trainings for coordinators on the municipal level, there is no evidence that the Ministry of Education has led a program on developing the staff capacities, and there is no re-structuring of the organization of the education directories. On the other hand, the preparation of the rules and supporting guides for education management in the municipalities is mainly organized through the integrated approach of developing the legal acts, which do determine the responsibilities of the

local education directories.

Finances for education- The financing of the professional education in Kosovo within the total budget has not been increased in the last few years. The increase of expenses in the professional education was almost totally contributed for securing the salaries for teachers and for supporting the salary increase in this sector. Otherwise, the government investments in other categories for education expenses of the professional education, like capital investments, goods and services have gradually decreased.

In the academic year of 2016/17 was 25.833 million EUR, whereas in the academic year 2019/20 was 28.584 million EUR.

The state has worked, as mentioned above, in composing the Strategic Planning of Education 2017-2021, which was organized in seven thematic fields for covering the relevant elements of the education in Kosovo: the inclusion, managing the education system, securing quality, teachers' professional development, teaching and learning, professional development and education of adults, and higher education.

This plan was composed and organized including the strategic objective, indicators of success for monitoring and implementation. In this strategy was also planned the timeframe and the budgetary plan in achieving the goals, and a total budget of 176.94 million EUR.

4. Globalization and Integration as challenges in the future, and recommendations

The phenomenon of globalization is usually qualified as a challenge for the states in the social sphere, mainly as a factor that limits the composition of politics related to the public goods, especially the social policies. On the other hand, the loss is mainly in those social countries that pay or plan a good part of their budget for the social field and cannot be competent in the globalization circumstances to the countries that do not have high taxes and social benefits. The globalization creates new risks for the countries, since it demands stronger social countries, with investments in the social sector, as a condition.

In the case of the Western Balkans, respectively Kosovo, the globalization process is analysed from the influence point of view of the international institutions on social policies, even though, for most of the countries, a special challenge in the future represents the European integration, and the possible membership in the European Union.

In the globalization context, the technological changes and the change of the education role, the professional development, the scientific aspects and the demand for knowledge through education, are striving the societies toward a society based on knowledge. Taking into consideration these factors and the demographic socio-economic circumstances, the education and the higher education in Kosovo are seen as a possibility and the key determiner in developing the human resources, which enables economic development, and it can also improve the welfare and the democratization of the society in Kosovo.

From 2015 the Western Balkans countries also compose annual programs for reforms in the economic sector and the provision of public goods and being concentrated in three segments: education and professional skills, employment and labour markets, social inclusion, reducing the poverty, and equal opportunities.

In this direction the EU did not achieve to practice sufficient influence on the social field, as a result of its focus on other aspects, the name and the status issue of Kosovo, that slower the integration process in the EU.

The membership of the Western Balkans countries and Kosovo in the European Union, even that

is not sure, it could bring some advantages and challenges, as well. The European integration can contribute in a direct manner on improving the social condition of these countries, in achieving some standards in the social field, experience exchange and knowledge and idea transfer, experts' contribution in continuous monitoring processes, possibilities for using the education institutions, and accessing the European social funds.

The Ministry of Finance is responsible for overseeing and implementing reforms related to public financial management in line with the Strategy for Modernization of Public Administration, the Public Finance Management Reform Strategy 2016-2020. In 2018, a rise in the “fiscal ceilings on debt-to-GDP ratio, the fiscal deficit, the public sector wage bill and the bank balance were all observed” (EC Report, 2019, p.12). This is relevant since this is also related with the education as a public good.

There are also potential influences that are indirect, mainly in the economic field, respectively in strengthening the rule of law and strengthening the democratic institutions.

Anyway, setting out the advantages and high standards on one hand, and the lack of capacities for using the European funds, on the other hand, could have an extraordinary influence on the provision of public goods in the future for Kosovo and the other Western Balkans countries.

The composition and determination of these policies between the globalization and the Europeanization will be set out by the historical inheritance and the capacities of the country.

The management of the education institutions, including the management staff, should work and invest more in professional development and digitalization in offering more qualitative services to pupils and students, initiate cultural activities, artistic events, etc.

The state can also contribute by enriching the studies with new fields, especially stimulating the innovative profiles, which give more options for employment, and represent a relevant priority in developing the human resources.

The state can contribute and improve the education system by increasing the financial assistance, especially that in higher education and in research works. A good example can be taken from the European countries, which do finance and support the employees or those involved in education according to their performance, success and results. All these will effect on the increase of the capacity and quality of education, as a public good.

On the other hand, in the efficient management of the public funds there are present several basic problems, like: public decision-making, budgetary planning, public procurement, project management, insufficient monitoring of public expenses, bad performance of efficiency management, public administration ethics, etc. The efficient management of public money in Kosovo is not a reality yet. The decision-making process of the government in all levels lack the coherent scientific analyses, and the action strategies, during the phase of expending the public money there is also a lack of human capacities of public expenses on projects. In the relation to the development of the education in Kosovo, respectively the higher education, the number of students in the public education is increasing, whereas the private sector is not a real competition, at least for the moment, even that there have been some efforts. In the time of globalization, the permanent scientific-technological revolution, the knowledge is suffering the biggest part of the devaluations. Investments in the education infrastructure – in the recent years there have been realized several investments in improving the infrastructure through buildings, renovations, extending the education institutions. On the other hand, there is no progress in the field of supplying the schools with technological means. All these impact in less public goods for the society, qualitatively or quantitatively, less social welfare, less foreign investments, less social equality, less collection of taxes by state institutions, etc. In the case of the Western Balkans,

respectively Kosovo, the globalization process is analysed from the influence point of view of the international institutions on social policies, even though, for most of the countries, a special challenge in the future represents the European integration, and the possible membership in the European Union.

5. Conclusion

The public goods as part of the social welfare in the aspect of the offer mainly are obligations of the public sector. The maximization of the possibilities and the results are the purpose of the activities of the private sector, which as its main purpose has the social welfare, and its continuous increase. The problems with the efficiency as a fundamental element of the social welfare in Kosovo should be seen by two aspects: first, the tax efficient policy, and second by the efficient management of public funds.

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The financing of the professional education in Kosovo within the total budget has not been increased in the last few years. The increase of expenses in the professional education was almost totally contributed for securing the salaries for teachers and for supporting the salary increase in this sector. Otherwise, the government investments in other categories for education expenses of the professional education, like capital investments, goods and services have gradually decreased. In the relation to the development of the education in Kosovo, respectively the higher education, the number of students in the public education is increasing, whereas the private sector is not a real competition, at least for the moment, even that there have been some efforts. In the time of globalization, the permanent scientific-technological revolution, the knowledge is suffering the biggest part of the devaluations.

The first and the most relevant action that should be done by the government, is to monitor the performance of the private education sector, and the public sector, as well, in order to create equal conditions for all providers in the higher education in the country. As a democratic country, Kosovo is trying to provide “fair” competition and fighting the monopoly in this sector, with the principal goal to work on the interest of the students, as the ones that will carry the future social and economic development.

The state can contribute and improve the education system by increasing the financial assistance, especially that in higher education and in research works. A good example can be taken from the European countries, which do finance and support the employees or those involved in education according to their performance, success and results. All these will effect on the increase of the capacity and quality of education, as a public good.

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