

EDUCATION SYSTEM IN ENGLAND AND WALES: SELECTED ISSUES

There is one education system in England and Wales. Therefore in this article important issues concerning the very system (its character, aims, structure, as well as the effectiveness of its functioning (administration, supervision, general rules of functioning and principles of assessment)) are analysed.

Key words: education system, pre-school education, compulsory schooling, education administration, financing education, special education.

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1. Introduction

Great Britain consists of four historical lands which are England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. These lands are divided into 80 counties, 9 regions and 3 insular areas. The whole Kingdom is inhabited by four national groups such as: the English (85% of the total population), the Scottish, the Welsh and the Irish. The official language is English, and in Wales also their own language, Welsh [1, p. 110]. England and Wales constitute one education system.

The objective of this paper is to demonstrate and analyze this system. Therefore, in the further part of this article some reflections will be presented on the essence, aims and elements of the structure of the education system in England and Wales, administration and supervision in education and an important issue of financing education in general.

2. Education system: a historical outline

Historically speaking, the state's part in the development of education was little, since the Church played the fundamental role. It was not until 1870 that a common primary school was introduced. There appeared local education authorities strictly cooperating with the Church. The government increasingly began to support the development

of education. In 1902 the School Boards were replaced by the Local Education Authorities, which are still in use [2, p. 15].

The 1944 Education Act, also known as 'the Butler Act', after the President of the Board of Education, who developed a compromise act project, was also approved by both the Parliament and the public opinion [3]. This act introduced common secondary education, and the compulsory schooling was extended to the age of 16. The Ministry of Education took over supervision and control over schools through Local Education Authorities.

The Education Act assumed equal education chances for everybody. The education reforms in 1950s and 60s sought to strengthen social equality ideals. In the 1970s this strategy was abandoned in favour of various educational 'paths', dependent on children and young people's level of ability. In the 1970s and 80s the uniquely dynamic development of tertiary schools and adult education began to happen. In this period of time 30 new higher schools (polytechnics, colleges and institutions) appeared, and in 1992 most of these schools were renamed to universities.

The basic aims of modern education in England referred to the 1944 Education Act. Children and young people were educated in accordance with requirements connected with their ages, abilities and skills in order to secure their further spiritual, moral, mental and physical development, meetings, however, wishes of their parents. In the 1980s there was the increasing public discontent with low results of school's efficiency. In the 1980s parents gained

more say in their children's selection of a school. Gradually the common practice of school reforming, based on conclusions from national reports on the state of education was being abandoned. This, however, does not mean that schools ceased to be reformed. On the contrary, the pace of reforms increased.

3. The education system structure. **Pre-school education**

Pre-school education in England could not be discussed until the moment when nursery was recognized as a very important factor in the whole education process, as a foundation of school, and when the public overcame the prejudice that it is just a 'by-product' of charity, necessary for the poorest only, and when the whole activity was based on scientific fundamentals [4].

In England and Wales, the School Standards and the 1998 Framework Act, in accordance with the changes introduced by the Education Act of 2002, define pre-school education as the 'full-time or part-time education suitable for children who have not attained compulsory school age [a semester after the fifth birthday] (whether provided at schools or elsewhere). As well as in the most countries, this level is not compulsory. Children aged from 3 months to 3 years are provided with care mainly in private and independent schools, and the parents are charged with fees. As far as children reach the age of 3 to 5 years, their care is offered in state nursery schools and pre-school classes in primary schools, as well as in the independent institutions. Recently the government has set an aim of the development of state education and care for small children in

cooperation with the independent sector. In England and Wales all 3- and 4-year-olds may now, if their parents wish, attend a part-time pre-school classes for free. The children who are entitled to the free care and education may usually attend 2.5 hours' classes five times a week for 38 weeks a year [5; 3].

On the strength of the Childcare Act of 2006, in September, 2008 The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) was introduced in England. The EYFS determines the rules of learning, development and care for children under 5 years old, and replaces the Foundation Stage (3–5 years old), formally established in 2002. In the frameworks of the above stage, children head for the achievement of the 'early learning goals' which embrace six key areas of learning: personal, social and emotional development; communication, language and literacy; problem solving, reasoning and innumeracy; knowledge and understanding of the world; physical development, and creative development.

In accordance with the central authorities' guidelines, the nursery school is the first educational institution made up together by children, parents and local authorities. All problems, including building new nursery schools, are solved with the participation and assistance of parents.

Compulsory schooling

<i>Primary education</i>	Age: 5–11 years (England/Wales)
<i>Secondary education</i>	Age: 11–16 years

Having reached the age of five, a child enters the period of compulsory school, which lasts till the age of sixteen (inclusive). Thus the overall period of compulsory education embraces 11 years. There is also an opportunity to start school at the age of four. The first level of education is primary school, which lasts six years and embraces two stages:

- infant schools for children aged 5–8;
- Junior schools for ages 8–11.

At the age of 11 pupils either are subject to the National curriculum assessment (SAT) or take the eleven plus exam (in some other counties). Their further education after primary school is continued in various types of diversified secondary school at the age from 11 to 16. Secondary school in England lasts at least 5 years, although there is an opportunity of its extension to 7 years. Most of secondary schools are extended, co-educational and providing with chances to select different curricula dependant on their abilities and educational aspirations. The so-called sixth forms of secondary school for young people aged 16–19 prepare the most talented for higher schools. Parents of a child who is going to secondary school have the same obligations as in previous schools. The purchase of a uniform (it is usually a suit with an embroidered emblem of the school, and a tie; its colour tells the year of education) and sportswear. The student receives a set of books and notebooks to use at school.

The curriculum of compulsory education in England is divided into four key stages (KS):

- KS1 (5–7 years old)
- KS2 (7–11 years old)

- KS3 (11–14 years old)
- KS4 (14–16 years old)

The obligatory subjects of the National curriculum at KS1-KS3 are: English, Mathematics, Science, Designing and Technology, Information and Communication Technology, History, Geography, Art and Designing, Music and Physical Education. Beginning from 2011, one Foreign Language has also been an obligatory subject at KS2. At KS4, in addition to the subjects listed above, also a Foreign Language and Citizenship are among the obligatory ones. At KS4 the number of compulsory subjects is lower and these are: English, Mathematics, Science, Information and Communication Technology, Citizenship and Physical Education. Additionally, regulations determine the so-called curriculum entitlement areas (CEA) or the areas of knowledge within the framework of which schools are obliged to organize classes if the pupils wish to take them. The CEA include the following subjects: Art, Designing, Technology, Humanities and Modern Languages. A few other subjects are obligatory too but do not belong to the National Curriculum (Religious Education at KS1-KS4, Sexual Education and Careers Education at KS4, etc). Although a subject of Personal, Social and Health Education is not compulsory in England, schools are expected to teach such lessons at all education stages. Promotion to the next class or the next key stage, in contrast to schools in other European countries, is automatic and does not depend on the results of assessment [5].

Compulsory education ends at the age of 16 with the GCSE exam (General Certificate of Secondary Education). Al-

though the exam is not obligatory, it enhances chances for future employment. After GCSE pupils may carry on their full-time education at school or college until they reach the age of 19, or they may finish their education at this stage and start a career.

Education in primary or secondary school is financed from public sources and no fee is required. It is at parents' discretion to which school they apply for their child's admission. Local authorities are obliged to comply with the valid principles of admission in order to simplify the recruitment process, so that every child was guaranteed a place in the school.

Most of primary and secondary schools financed from public sources are coeducational. Secondary schools (comprehensive schools) in England admit young people regardless of their abilities and previous performance. These schools are the most popular: 89% of pupils attend them. These institutions combine various areas of teaching: comprehensive, technical and prevocational, which provides a wide selection of life opportunities. In some regions of England there are also grammar schools where admission is selective. Gaining a place in a grammar school depends on an examination scholarship, which is not easy to attain for average-talented 11-year-olds. Only 3% of young people are admitted to grammar schools. The basic function of these schools is to prepare their pupils for the university studies.

In England and Wales schools have to work 190 days per year. Moreover, teachers are expected to be ready to work 5 extra days per year, which should be devoted to activities other

than teaching (e.g. professional training). Time frameworks of semesters and holidays are set by local education authorities or the school managing organ, depending on the school's legal status. The school year generally lasts from the beginning of September till the second half of July. Schools usually provide classes five days per week (from Monday till Friday). Currently some steps have taken towards a standardized school year divided into six terms. Several local authorities introduced this new model in the school year 2004/05, and the statistics of the Local Government Association of 2008 demonstrates that the model has already introduced in most of schools. Decisions on this issue are at the discretion of local authorities or an organ managing the school [5]

A typical element of the British education system is private schools (so-called *public schools*). They are exclusive institutions providing education mainly in classics and humanities, known for their strict discipline and pupils' selection. These are fee paid schools despite the fact that part of them benefit from LEA financial resources. A numerous group of such subsidized institutions are 168 grammar schools (direct grant grammar schools) admitting outstandingly talented pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds [1, p. 113]. Educational methods applied in these schools are characterized by:

- providing the pupils with the best possible living conditions;
- education by the means of exercises and sports;
- art education;
- scouting;
- very high teaching standards.

Special education

Currently an emphasis is put on educating children with special educational needs (SEN) along with their peers in commonly available schools on a large scale. If a child needs help in larger degree than the school is able to provide within the available means, local authorities are obliged to issue a statement on special educational needs, which presents specific the needs and scope of indispensable additional education? The Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Act of 2001 increased in England and Wales the rights of pupils with special educational needs in commonly available schools. These rights inflict on educational institutions an obligation of securing appropriate conditions for the education of disabled pupils [1, p. 9–10].

4. Exams

All pupils at the ages of 7, 11, 14 and 16 have been embraced with National Curriculum Tests. Seven-year-olds are subject to written tests on knowledge and skills. In the case of fourteen-year-olds, tests are on Mathematics and Science, and last for 6 hours. There are four levels of assessment centrally set. An appropriate level is chosen by the teachers who teach a particular group. The teachers assess their pupils work and attach to these marks their own remarks on the level of abilities of a particular pupil. The ultimate approval of the assessment is performed by external examiners, who determine whether the produced documents justify the assessment or not.

This strategy manifests care for the standard and comparability of school

marks. The final assessment of sixteen-year-olds or older pupils is a result of examination tests and is requisite to receive a secondary school graduation certificate. Pupils are graded on an 8-point scale. The final mark depends on not only the final exam result, but also on marks received within the last two years. Two years after passing this exam pupils can take an exam in 2–4 subjects (usually three) on a higher level [2, p. 16–17].

5. Education administration and supervision

On the central level education in England and Wales is administered by the Ministry of Education. Although 2,500 people are employed in the department, direct management and supervision over schools is exercised by Local Education Authorities, which are accountable to the Local Education Committees, which consist of elected representatives from the local government [2, p. 19].

In England and Wales there is a certain number of schools founded by religious communities (Anglicans, Roman-Catholics and Jews). In these schools churches decide on religion education syllabi, school admission and teachers' employment. These institutions are financially supported by the LEA, which in this way they has a certain influence on the curricula in these schools [6, p. 16–18].

A head teacher plays an important role in the English education system. He/she is responsible for the organization, management and control of everything that happens in the school. Each school is obliged to publish a prospectus, which reaches potential pupils' par-

ents. The prospectuses contain specific data on the school, including examination results from previous years. School management lies within the head teacher's competence. He/she is assisted by a deputy head teacher. Teachers and assistants perform an educational process. Teachers are mostly graduates of education departments at the universities, colleges of education or former polytechnics. In teachers' training the practical aspect is emphasised, i.e. methodology of teaching and effective implementation of the educational process [2, p. 20].

Since 1984 only higher school graduates with a professional title to teach their subject have been employed in English schools. Beside university degree, an English teacher has to receive a qualified teacher's license on the basis of his/her professional title and experience gained at work. Although skill upgrading trainings are not compulsory for teachers, educational authorities may put pressure on teachers to make them participate in them. After two years of work confirmed by positive opinions of inspectors and the headmaster, teachers gain the status of qualified teacher.

Supervision over schools is performed by Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI). They are not only experts on education, but also representatives of other professions. They work in teams and contact particular LEAs, especially the head of education department in order to perform school inspections. The head of Education Department has a team at his/her assistance (psychologists, former teachers, representatives of young people, etc).

6. Financing education

In England the Department of Education and Skills (DFES) is responsible for financing education. DFES distributes financial resources to various education institutions at the central level and to local authorities (in order to perform concrete priorities determined by the government). The planned expenses are defined in the Department's Investment Strategy and published thereafter [7].

Nursery and primary schools are financed from the central budget through the local authorities. State schools acting within the framework of compulsory education are granted 100% of funds from local governments' budgets for current expenses and investments. In England schools also receive funds for conducting the so-called sixth form (for 16-year-olds). Expenses are often determined on the school level. A school receives an individual budget calculated on the basis of an algorithm which is subsequently passed to the managing organ in order to cover current expenses on the school's activity. The management of the school budget is a common obligation of the managing organ and the head teacher, who are responsible for making the best decisions for the school and for effective spending the funds in accordance with the school's needs. Since April 2006 there are different solutions in England which involve receiving funds by the local authorities from two different sources: (i) from the general government subsidy for education (the Dedicated School Grant, the DSG) which includes most of the funds, and (ii) from special subsidies for schools for specific purposes (specific grants).

The Dedicated School Grant (DSG) is different for particular local authorities. The calculation of this grant is based on such indicators as: expected number of pupils, expected individual budgets of particular schools, needs for other educational services in a particular area (e.g. special education), etc. The grant is passed to the local authorities but the latter keep the right to specific distribution of the funds among schools, depending on local needs and priorities. This concerns, for example, the distribution of funds among the age groups from 5-year-old children through primary and secondary schools. Each local authority entity prepares principles of fund distribution (based on the School Finance Regulations 2006) and formulates them in the Scheme for Financing Schools.

Principles established in this way lead to the resolution on an individual budget for each school. Individual budgets are usually set on the basis of the number of pupils, but also other elements are taken into consideration, (e.g. for example, pupils' special educational needs, pupils' educational achievements etc). While working on a school's individual budget, local authorities have to foremost take into account the presence pupils of disadvantaged groups. Local authorities may also reserve part of the funds for special purposes determined in the central legislature (e.g. special education, extra teachers). These authorities are also obliged to consult a local School Forum while establishing or changing the algorithms of granting funds (a School Forum is compulsorily appointed by the local authorities and is a representation of the school managing councils and head teachers in a par-

ticular area. The Forum expresses their opinion on subjects concerning a school budget, especially expenses on behalf of pupils).

7. Conclusion

The analysis of the education system in England and Wales, as well as the institutions affecting its effective functioning, indicate that it is basically stable though the required modifications and improvements.

It is foremost important to emphasise that a great number of efforts have to be taken in education to strengthen the multicultural English society. Especially problematic is assimilation of the children of Muslim families, since Islamists demand separate schools for their fellow-confessors. Arguably the age at which young people can leave education will be raised from 16 to 18-19 years old. The expectation of increase in the number of people admitted to higher education institutions also seems realistic.

Changes in teachers' training are also envisaged. The opinion that teachers should be foremost educated in schools gains an increasing number of supporters. There appears a notion of 'training-schools' as it happens in the education of

doctors and lawyers. It is worth to mention that these tendencies are undoubtedly different from those occurring in Western Europe, where teachers' training is deeply rooted in the universities.

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Міруч А. Система освіти в Англії та Уельсі: окремі питання.

В Англії та Уельсі існує одна система освіти. У цій статті проаналізовано важливі питання, що стосуються самої системи, – її характер, цілі, структура, а також ефективність її функціонування (управління, нагляд, загальні правила функціонування та принципи оцінювання).

Ключові слова: система освіти, дошкільна освіта, обов'язкова шкільна освіта, управління освітою, фінансування освіти, спеціальна освіта.

Мируч А. Система образования в Англии и Уэльсе: отдельные вопросы.

В Англии и Уэльсе существует одна система образования. В этой статье проанализированы важные вопросы, касающиеся самой системы, – ее характер, цели,

структура, а также эффективность ее функционирования (управление, надзор, общие правила функционирования и принципы оценки).

Ключевые слова: система образования, дошкольное образование, обязательное школьное образование, управления образованием, финансирование образования, специальное образование.

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