THE CHALLENGES OF PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION IN INFORMATION SOCIETY

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The period of post-industrial information society is fraught with numerous implications in various domains of life. The rapid pace of information accumulation and development of informational technologies pose a considerable threat to the present system of education as a whole and higher education in particular. Higher education which is supposed to turn out proficient specialists and academics in one line or another is no longer efficient in this task as the subject matter which has been recently established as stable seems to be discarded of in a matter of a couple of years. Consequently, we are witnesses of consistent discrepancy between the requirements of information society and ever-lagging-behind level of education provided. In response to the pressure of information inflow

- the concept of lifelong learning was introduced as a helpful remedy to keep pace with changes in the development of the world;
- the paradigm of knowledge acquisition gave way to developing a certain repertoire of skills;
- network and intellectual technologies were introduced into the education process.

However, sweeping changes in higher education brought about some problems that could hardly be anticipated before. For one thing, reforms in higher education, as it is assumed in research, seem to have set too high hopes on and market criteria, with its prevailing ideology of efficiency and clientization of students. Managerial approach has pushed the students into the role of clients and the academics into a role of employees with limited leeway for initiative. It is time to reconsider the function of higher education in this respect. Secondly, it is common knowledge that the principle policy underlying higher education in any country is the policy of pervasive shift from what is known to be behaviorist approach to approach which actively engages students into the construction of knowledge often as result of shared decision-making. However, the technologies which could facilitate this process are at their stage of development. With regard to IT-technologies, a comprehensive research is required to single out its potential and limitations in improving the learning outcome. The major challenges in higher education and the areas of particular research within the framework of information society are as follows:

- addressing issues for internationalization of higher education in a more systematic ways than just focusing on import of concepts;
- implementing a shift from over-emphasis on clearly defined and measurable objectives to growing complexity awareness in determining the policy of higher education;
- curriculum revision in the wake of changing talents, motives and career prospects of the rising number of students;
- defining the proper ratio and interrelation between elite and mass higher education, disciplinarity and interdisciplinarity, academic and professional emphasis, acquisition and utilization of knowledge, relationships between teaching and research, higher education and employment;
- enhancing management of higher education, combined with efforts of evaluation and quality control;
- organizing longitudinal studies;
- specifying the nature and methodology of development generic skills and metacognition.

Graduate quality of students' capabilities means not only the acquisition of skills and knowledge related to professional areas, but also the development of values and cross-cultural awareness through intercultural learning and engagement.

Intercultural paradigm of learning implies

- In-depth study of your own culture. Martha Nussbaum believes strongly that *local or national identities should not be held with blind commitment, but subject to* critical, rational evaluation and comparison with the loyalties and needs of others, in particular, how are national values, actions and privileges viewed by people in other countries.
- In-depth study and experience of other cultures.
- Studying the interrelations of cultures as they evolve through time and as they interact geographically at any given point in time.
- Studying the ways of connecting the global with the local – international multicultural interactions.
- Studying geoethics of citizenship. Geoethics of citizenship helps students to understand that "their choices, how they live, how they vote, where they work and travel, take place in a global network of complex interrelations, and in this sense are political.

Educators know that communicating and interacting with culturally different others is psychologically intense and has several risk factors associated with it, including risk of embarrassment and risk of failure. Intercultural education strives to develop critical engagement, self-reflection and sensitivity towards any aspect of interaction and communication between "self" and "others". It involves the development of understandings of how the languages and cultures of others influence their thoughts, values, actions and feelings. This cannot occur unless we understand the ways in which our own language and culture influences our actions, reactions, values and beliefs. This is complex and challenging and encourages students and staff to model situations where there is recognition of the manifestation of cultural difference, and where equal and meaningful reconstructive cross-cultural dialogue can occur.