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## EDUCATION IN UNIFYING EUROPE

*The main assumption of the text is to draw attention to the need for a new educational perspective. Education must take the question of how to help information society in becoming society of wisdom. This requires building the European community of educators.*

My statement applies to the current educational trends that are clearly visible on the continent due to the process of building an European educational space. Although official opinions and even liabilities that relate to the desired shape of education uttered by the prominent representatives of unifying Europe are mainly related to higher education, however – at least indirectly – they also apply to lower levels of education, without which academic education could not exist. These statements are the result of strong social well-established belief that function of education can be reduced to equip man – prospective employee – with the skills enable him to adapt quickly to changes and new employment needs. Such thinking is derived from the recognition of social work as a major intensification of economic growth. It is especially reflected in many official documents of the European Union, of which pierces the desire to win the race with the U.S. economy. The Council of Europe (gathering the Heads of State or Government of the EU Member States) at its meeting in Lisbon in March 2000 confirmed that the European Union has faced fundamental changes as a result of globalization and the development of a knowledge-based economy, and agreed that in the year 2010 should be achieved the following strategic objective:

*the European economy should become the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world, capable of sustainable economic growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion.*

These changes need not only a radical transformation of the European economy, but also an ambitious program of modernization of social welfare and

education systems. The European Council called on the Council for Education (consisting of the Ministers of Education of the EU) and the European Commission to take a reflection on the concrete objectives of education systems, focusing on common problems, while respecting the diversity of each country. Here are the educational priorities to achieve this objective:

### **1. Improving the quality and efficiency of education systems in the countries of the European Union.**

Specific objectives:

1. Improving the quality of education and training for teachers and trainers.
2. Developing the skills and competencies needed in the society of knowledge.
3. Ensuring universal access to ICT.
4. Increasing enrollments in science and engineering.
5. More investment in education.

### **2. Facilitating universal access to education.**

Specific objectives:

1. Creating an open learning environment.
2. Increasing the attractiveness of educational process.
3. Supporting active citizenship, equal opportunities and social cohesion.

### **3. The integration of education with their external environment.**

Specific objectives:

1. Strengthening the links with the world of work, research institutions, employers and employees.
2. Developing entrepreneurship.
3. Improving language teaching.

4. Increasing mobility and exchange of students, teachers and researchers.
5. Strengthening European cooperation.

Cited list of educational priorities is a proof of the fact that education is still regarded as an external instrument to the personal needs of individuals, development of the ability to understand meaning of the world, development of character, cultural openness, development of the responsibility for shaping their own fate and the future of the environment. It completely ignores what was probably the most important distinguishing feature of European culture – reflect humanist who surrendered technology and economics to objectives determined by wisdom. The progress has begun to be treated as an autotelic value. The solutions that are considered to be progressive no longer require any additional justification. The anthropomorphic perception of reality, present not only in the individual but also encoded in a social perspective, means that almost every novelty – especially the one that results in increased efficiency of individual and group work, practical benefits, the convenience of living or enhances the scope of our control over the environment – is usually positively valued and leads to a deeper analysis of the far-reaching impact of this novelty. The effects of this are numerous and visible. Our admiration for the ability of technology development is not conducive to seeing symptoms indicative of the fact that industrial civilization, evolving over hundreds of years, was on the verge of global collapse. Critical evaluation taking place in the civilization process were established only at the end of the twentieth century.

It is easy to see that in the disseminated European education, and Poland is a clear proof, dominate the pragmatic, even utilitarian trends. These are not the trends defining the European philosophy of education based on the belief that technology and economy are at most tools, so they are ministering to the achievement of the objectives of substantially different character.

These basic goals are related to the quality of human life, especially in the spiritual dimension. In our civilization, the response of desired educational direction were directed by questions about how to control their own lives? How to make it a valuable and rich? Worthy and happy? How can they be related to participation in culture, and cooperation with other people? The right place to seek answers to the question “how to live?” were the walls of the university, which gave birth to the philosophy of education. Today philosophers are being replaced by politicians and sometimes educational officials in formulating answers to these fundamental to the human existential questions.

In this situation, more than ever, the rhetorical question posed by T. Eliot gains in importance:

*"Where is the wisdom we have lost in knowledge?"*

*Where is the knowledge we have lost in information?"*

It is obvious that modern education, including university education, can not ignore the needs of the economy, even those that generate demand for instrumental skills. International comparisons show the undeniable importance of human capital for economic productivity. The need to train staff able to use the new technologies must be taken into account in the design of educational systems. The point is that

such a vocational training course does not become the sole determinant of school care about the essence of education. Enlightened Europeans perceive the threat arising from this approach to determine the educational tasks when they write in their report: "To create all the conditions for young people that enable them exploring the aesthetic, artistic, sporting, scientific, cultural and social experiences, which will complement the transmission of information. The school should devote more time to art and poetry, as in many countries, education is more utilitarian than cultural."<sup>8</sup>

Education has never been at the forefront of change. Rather, its main duty applies to the transfer of cultural values and achievements. Education is rooted in the past to protect what humanity deems important and what can be the foundation for building the future. The point is that the future has to be somehow predictable. Even if not at the level bordering on certainty that at least with high probability, and must be somehow felt intuitively. Meanwhile, the early twenty-first century world has lost the predictability of the events that we tend to estimate as positive (communication of people around the world, communication between people, medicine, comfort of life) as well as the predictability of the real threat. In television transmissions it is difficult to distinguish fiction from reality. This unpredictability of the world promotes human concentration here and now, the life of the moment, the near-term thinking. Zygmunt Bauman characterizing the change in the situation of modern man uses the metaphor of the pilgrim and tourist. We

changed from the pilgrims, who know where to go and what to do into tourists oriented on a constant search for new sensations and experiences, choosing from the visited places only what appeals to us. A tourist is"... is extraterritorial, he lives his extraterritoriality as a privilege, as independence, as the right to be free, free to choose, as a licence to restructure the world. What life's equipment of a tourist does not include is a moral responsibility – cumbersome, overwhelming, receiving the joy of life and peace of mind<sup>9</sup>. The responsibility for the country that a tourist visits. "Ideally: you should be a tourist anywhere and anytime. Do not belong to the place. Maintain a spiritual distance against the physical proximity. Act with caution. Do not give up. Be free – pay in advance for the release of all non-contractual obligations. And the best – in advance apply to the moral conscience a handful of sleeping pills"<sup>10</sup>.

The assessment quoted above made by the sensitive ethics may seem exaggerated. Let us therefore take a look at the self-reflection of the American journalist, which corresponds well with the above theses. "I belong to an entirely new generation of people, the tribe of wanderers. ... I am a multinational soul on a multinational globe. The entrance to the plane for me is as natural as picking up the phone. I give my self and I transport my self together with me. I'm never surprised. This type of life, of course, gives an unprecedented sense of freedom and mobility. We can go through the world as through a fair miracles, take something at every stop, treat the world as a

<sup>8</sup> L'Éducation: Un trésor est caché dedans. UNESCO 1996.

<sup>9</sup> Z. Bauman: Etyka ponowoczesna. Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, Warszawa 1996, p. 328-329.

<sup>10</sup> Op. cit., p.331.

supermarket. We have no home, we have hundreds of homes. ... But what price I pay for it? ... I sometimes wonder if this new type of non-affiliation is foreign to something fundamental to human nature. ... What we can die for, what passion can we live for, if you do not ever feel the pain of separation and the joy of surprise?"<sup>11</sup>

Can we have an impact on young people in such a culture? Especially when one proclaims the end of identity, which means that you do not need and can not even be the same throughout life, as an attempt to design your own way is doomed in advance to failure. Instead, we can choose from a variety of possibilities and embodied in different roles depending on whether the time of day?

After the periods of apocalypse in teachers appeared doubts whether adults are still able to direct the world in the rut of law and order. The criticism of educational opportunities in targeting young people by the adults responsible for the cruelty, injustice, hypocrisy in present models of culture was manifested<sup>12</sup>. Even today there are negative conceptions of pedagogy or anti-pedagogy, denying the validity of all planned educational intervention based on the assumption that the child is an imperfect human being that need adults, specialized in the methods of placing it in the process of understanding the world. Despite all these stipulations one would like to call the title of the last book by the world-known Polish philosopher of education, B. Suchodolski: education, after all.

<sup>11</sup> Citation from Z. Melosik: *Globalny nastolatek. (Re)konstrukcje tożsamości w ponowoczesnym świecie. "Horyzonty Wychowania" 2/2002 (3), p. 138*

<sup>12</sup> See: B. Suchodolski: *Pedagogika*. PWN, Warszawa 1980

One of the Polish authors, T. Pilch begins his book with these words: "The future civilization directly or indirectly shape the school. In view of the irreversible processes of public education at every meaning of the concept of civilization and its spiritual content and shape of the material will depend on the properties of the emotional, intellectual, in which equip him any form of education system"<sup>13</sup> If we agree with the author's opinion – the fundamental issue is the shape of that education.

Last quarter of the past century has brought change the function that is assigned to education. This function begins to be determined by the position of the philosophy of education. In discussions on education – more and more clearly are presented the issue of values, and the questions of the quality of life and the quality of human are the axis around which teachers focus their statements. This trend also arrange international studies that show the contents of the new tasks of education. Just to mention a few: Learning to be. The World of education today on tomorrow, No Limits to Learning (Report to the Club of Rome), Learning: the treasure within: report to UNESCO of the International Commission on Education for the Twenty-first Century.

The authors of these studies associate with the education the causative factors of human that are necessary to prevent major weak points resulting from the current device in the world. Education is seen as a utopia, but the necessary one, perhaps the only one that remains in thinking about repairing the roads of the world. J. Delors writes,

<sup>13</sup> T. Pilch: *Spory o szkołę: pomiędzy tradycją a wyzwaniem współczesności*. Wydawnictwo Akademickie Żak, Warszawa 1999, p. 7

"It is not a "magic bullet" or spell "sesame open" that introduce the world that has realized all ideals. It is certainly only one option, but to a greater extent than any other serving more harmonious, authentic human development, which aims at the eradication of poverty, exclusion, misunderstanding, oppression, war"<sup>14</sup>

Just like any utopia, this one can not be fully achieved. However, as G. Polya said on another occasion: although no one came to the North Star but a lot of people while looking at it, have found the right path. It is worth, therefore, to consider the circumstances that may be helpful in completing the educational tasks outlined above. I think that the three conditions play a key role here.

The first condition relates to overcome strong social well-established belief that function of education can be reduced to equip man – prospective employee – with the skills enable him to adapt quickly to changes and new employment needs. Such thinking is derived from the recognition of social work as a major intensification of economic growth. It ignores the important for the pace of development of the country of so called social capital, which is formed and accumulated through education based primarily on the achievements of the humanities and social sciences.

The second condition is associated with the giving the education the right, which will lead participant of this education to the wisdom. Currently, delighted with technical and informational civilization and its possibilities we seem to forget that the information does not create a

meaningful vision of the world. We are pleased with the ease to obtain information on whether the bus will leave on time?, How much can I get for my car?, How it is formed eye of a needle?, How to prepare flounder? ... and we can not answer when someone asks a question, "So what?". Education, if we want it to prevent ad hoc culture must take the question of how to help information society in becoming society of wisdom.

The third condition concerns the training of teachers. They are involved in shaping the character and spirit of the new generation. In addition to the traditional duties of placing students into the world of knowledge and national culture, there are new tasks ahead each teacher and professional group as a whole. It designates the role of champion of mutual understanding and tolerance, a guide who opens worlds beyond existing horizons, prejudice and nationalism for students.

Europe takes the economic race. It has a huge potential, which enables to be a leader in this race.. Building the European community of educators can greatly assist successes along this way, and at the same time preserve the values that have shaped our identity.

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<sup>14</sup> L'Éducation: Un trésor est caché dedans. UNESCO 1996.

**ЛАЩИК ЯН. ОСВІТА В ОБ'ЄДНАНІЙ ЄВРОПІ**

*Основна ідея статті – повернути увагу до необхідності створення нового освітнього підходу в процесі переходу від інформаційного суспільства до суспільства мудрості. Ця проблема вимагає створення європейської спільноти педагогів.*

**ЛАЩИК ЯН. ОБРАЗОВАНИЕ В ОБЪЕДИНЕННОЙ ЕВРОПЕ**

*Основная идея статьи – привлечь внимание к необходимости создания нового образовательного подхода в процессе перехода от информационного общества к обществу мудрости. Эта проблема требует создания европейского сообщества педагогов.*