

European Integration of Ukrainian Higher Education

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Abstract: *The general sketches of necessary educational reforms facing the European universities in the XXI century have been defined in the article. The possible perspectives of Ukrainian higher education integration into European knowledge society have been suggested in the paper. The author also outlines the problems causing the reformation strategies in education sector in Europe as well as those being sought for in Ukraine.*

Key words: *Bologna process, civic education, EU, globalization, higher education reforms, integration, knowledge society.*

The last ten years have seen the issue of globalization moving from one in which it was incumbent to prove that there was such a phenomenon as globalization to a situation where there is broad acceptance that there has been a fundamental change in the environment in which humanity finds itself, in comparison with the world of our ancestors.

Globalization, as A.Giddens puts it 'is a shift in our very life circumstances; it is the way we now live' [5]. Changes in those life circumstances are far-reaching, comprehensive and move at a faster pace. Indeed the speed of change is closely allied to the growth of communications.

Sociologists perceive globalization in terms of flows of people and services, both globally and locally [1], which is basically because modern communication technology enables people to transcend space with ease.

Higher education, as a consequence, has moved from a peripheral to a central position in the responses of governments to globalization; it is a key factor in the developing countries, evidenced by the World Bank's 'Task Force Report on Higher Education in Developing Countries' [9]; it is undoubtedly viewed as crucial to the developed countries.

Peter Scott pointed out that 'all universities are subject to the same processes of globalization – partly as objects, victims even, of these processes, but partly as subjects or key agents of globalization'. They are positioned within national systems 'locked into national contexts' and the majority are still state institutions. Yet globalization 'is inescapably bound up with the emergence of a knowledge society that trades in symbolic goods, worldwide brands, images-as-commodities and scientific know-how' [8, p. 127]. The tensions generated by such a dichotomy necessarily lead to change and reform. Governments are moved to 'steer' higher education in the hope of repositioning it to increase effectiveness and efficiency.

Concerning European universities, it is due to mention that they face demands for urgent and radical reform. A standard claim is that environments are changing rapidly and that universities are not able or willing to respond adequately. It is necessary to rethink and reshape their internal order and role in society simply because European universities do not learn, adapt and reform themselves fast enough. Reform plans comprise the purposes of universities, that is, definitions of what the University is, can be and should be, criteria for quality and success, the kinds of research, education and services to be produced, and for whom.

The reform rhetoric is both problem driven and solution driven. On the one hand, reform demands are raised in an atmosphere of a perceived performance crisis, or even an identity crisis. In particular, Europe's capacity to compete in the global "knowledge economy" is seen to be affected negatively by the perceived incapability of her universities to meet the fast growing demand for higher-level skills and competencies, and research-based commercial technologies. Europe has to prioritize university modernization because her universities are lagging behind the best universities in the USA and because upcoming

China and India will make competition among universities and economies even stiffer. On the other hand, reform proposals are launched in an atmosphere of high hopes and expectations.

A key question is: How do European processes of cooperation, integration and policy making affect the institutional dynamics of the University?

In Europe, universities have historically played an important role in nation- and state-building, that is, in supplying states with educated manpower, building a national consciousness and identity, integrating national elites, and providing a national research capacity for economic and social development. As a result, research and even more so education has turned out to be politically sensitive, making it difficult to achieve institutionalized European-level cooperation and integration in these policy areas. The idea of a European University was, for example, presented at the Messina Conference in 1955 and one argument was that integration should not be limited to the economic domain but should also include some form of cultural integration [3, p.26].

The intergovernmental Bologna Declaration and the subsequent process, aiming to establish a European Higher Education Area (EHEA) without borders in 2010, have also aroused high expectations. Ministers responsible for education tend to define European cooperation as a cultural project and they emphasize that the need to increase global economic competitiveness must be balanced with the objective of improving the social characteristics of the EHEA. Europe's cultural richness, national identities, and linguistic diversity have to be preserved, and educational reforms should take an interest in the region's social cohesion and cultural development (European Ministers Responsible for Education 2003, 2005).

Likewise, the attitude towards the Commission has changed and the Commission has achieved an increasingly strong role. Brussels is now interacting directly with universities and a new type of coordination and collaboration has been launched. There has, however, been a gap between intention and the organized capacity to get things done in a coordinated and consistent way, making the road from political declarations to implementation uncertain. For example, there was an "utter absence of any prior assessment into the capacity of national systems to adapt to the Bologna principles and even less whether the dateline set was itself set on any basis other than hunch and adhococracy" [6], and the lack of a permanent secretariat, an institutionalized administrative executive support structure, and independent resources has opened for Commission influence based upon relatively modest support in terms of money and staff. Therefore, while the Bologna process was initiated as a countermove to EU and external sectors, it has increasingly become dependent upon the Commission and its definitions of problems and solutions. The Commission from its side links the Bologna process to its own actions in the field of education and training by stating that the Bologna process "contributes actively to the achievement of the Lisbon objectives and is therefore closely linked to the 'Education and Training 2010' work programme" [2].

The solution of both the European Commission activity and Bologna process prescribes a new organizational paradigm, rebalancing external and internal relations of authority and power in university governance. It presents the kind of University that is deemed to be necessary for the "Europe of knowledge" as envisioned by the European Commission. The claim is that the solution, if implemented successfully, has a potential for improving performance by changing university practices and structures developed over long historical periods, as well as conceptions of the proper role of government in the economy and society. The remedies offered are celebrating private enterprises and competitive markets and they can be seen as a solution looking for problems, and usually finding them, in all sectors of society.

The "solution", in simplified form, suggests that more complex and competitive economic and technological global environments require rapid adaptation to shifting

opportunities and constraints. This, in turn, requires more determined university strategies and a strong, unitary and professional leadership and management capacity that matches those of modern private enterprises. University management needs to control available financial and human resources and the power of the executive and the central administration of the University has to be strengthened. Collegial, disciplinary and democratic internal organization and individual academic freedom are viewed as hindrances to well-timed decisions and good performance.

Furthermore, it is argued that because government interference tends to reduce adaptability, performance and competitiveness, government and politics should have a less prominent role in the governance of universities as well as in society at large. Universities should have more autonomy and greater distance to government. Intervention by public authorities should be at arms length and not go beyond providing a "leveled playing field," clear mission statements and accountability mechanisms for the results achieved. Universities should, however, be better integrated into society, in particular into industry and the business community, and should be governed by bodies that reflect a wide range of stakeholders. Third party evaluation and quality assurance should be organized through a variety of university-external bodies, such as research councils and accreditation agencies.

Reformers argue that the proposed changes will advance knowledge, produce functional improvement, and benefit society in general. The dominant language is emphasizing "modernization," the economic functions of the University, necessary adaptations to economic and technological change, and economy and efficiency. The vision is a University that is dynamic and adaptive to consumers and that gives priority to innovation, entrepreneurship and market orientation.

All this "necessitates new institutional and organizational approaches to staff management, evaluation and funding criteria, teaching and curricula and, above all, to research and research training." There should be multilateral consortia, joint courses, joint degree arrangements, networks and cooperation. The Commission also opens for a further separation of teaching from research and for more differentiation and stratification among universities, so that not all research and higher education will be of equal excellence, yet with fewer differences between countries and more differences within each country. This means that the educational system is to be converted into the so called "knowledge industry".

The reform program lacks an institution and sector specific view taking into account the specific properties of the University as an academic institution and higher education as a policy sector. It is argued that the EU has already supported the conversion process of sectors such as the steel industry or agriculture; it now faces the imperative to modernize its "knowledge industry" and in particular its universities. According to the Commission the "knowledge industry," like other industries, urgently needs reform and the goals and remedies are basically the same as for other sectors.

Indicators of reform success are primarily economic. The key component of the Lisbon process and the proposed University reforms reflect the aspirations to make Europe the most competitive economy within 2010. Research and higher education are identified as key instruments for economic performance and growth and for mastering global competition. The guiding philosophy for research policy is to create a single market for research – the creation, diffusion, and exploitation of scientific and technical knowledge, a vision that dovetails nicely with the general market-building ideology of the EU. Strengthening the triangle between research, higher education and innovation is supposed to make Europe more successful in converting its research achievements into commercial technologies [7].

While the Commission claims that there is a reform consensus, it also observes that there is a general need to build trust in science and technology among ordinary citizens.

The general public in Europe is seen to become more concerned about the social and economic impact of scientific and technological advances, as well as about how decisions relating to these developments are taken.

International competitiveness and the University's ability to do good for society are seen to be "held back" by the role historically played by governments [4, p.7]. The state is supposed to have a less dominant role as a funder, receiver of graduates, and user of knowledge. There should be governance by standardization, dialogue, benchmarking, and exchange of "good practice." "Soft" methods, such as the Open Method of Coordination (OMC), are presented as an alternative to the "hard" laws that cannot easily be used in European coordination of the sector. The accountability of the University to society also requires an external system of quality assurance and accreditation, and a move from state control to being accountable to society and customers. There should be external controls through increased competition, externally defined standards and goals, demands for results that can be documented in numbers, and external monitoring units.

Reforms are driven both by the fear of falling behind and by promises of new resources. There is a funding deficit and investments in European universities need to be increased and diversified. The average gap in resources compared to the USA is, according to the Commission, some \$ 10,000 per student. As is argued by European Commission President Barroso (2006) "Europe's economic future depends on having the best educated and trained people, with the full range of skills and the adaptability required in a 'knowledge economy.' That is why we must boost investment in higher education significantly. The Commission is suggesting a target of 2% of GDP by 2010." Obviously, this proposal for a 2% of GDP investment target for higher education has to be distinguished from the 3% of GDP investment target with respect to R&D as agreed upon by the Barcelona European Council in 2002.

Of course, the needed reforms are multi-vocal and time-consuming, but nevertheless they seem to be possible in implementation.

In accordance with the mentioned issues of European higher education society, the main educational problems that face the Ukraine today are:

- Working out the principles, mechanisms and procedures of providing doctor's studies as the third Bologna cycle;
- Employment of graduates of the first cycle – bachelors;
- Creation of quality system of education, which coincides with European standards and norms;
- Providing the mobility of students and professors staff;
- Development of practice of social partnership of higher education establishments with employers, citizens and social unions to get them to the process of making the decisions about higher education.

The main goal of Ukraine participation in integration process in sphere of educational services is increasing of Ukrainian high education competitiveness on the basis of integration to European educational space under conditions of preserving best traditions of national educational system.

Among 489 universities, which have signed Magna Charta Universitatum until today there are 10 Ukrainian ones: Donetsk National University; Dnipropetrovsk National University; Odessa National Academy of Law, Odessa National University named after I.I.Mechnikov, National Academy of Law named after Yaroslav Mudriy, Ukraine National Technical University "Kiev Polytechnic Institute", Mariupol Humanitarian University, East-Ukrainian National University named after Volodymyr Dal, Kharkiv State Economic University, Kharkiv State University named after V.N. Karazin.

For some years now, the tertiary education sector has been the object of intense debates. The need for reform is considerable, but the approaches to the reforms appear heterogeneous and possess an experimental character. Especially the reform of contents

and methodologies in the higher education institutions, which could not be imposed by an act of Parliament or decree, depend on the innovative spirit of single institutions and their leaders. In addition, low wages and poor working conditions result in personnel being generally neither interested in nor motivated by reform, which should be the basis for real changes. The thoroughly outdated and insufficient equipment of the institutions of higher education also represents a significant obstacle to the progress of the reforms. Until now, the majority of the proposed changes have not progressed much from the planning stage. A new Higher Education Act is still being drafted, so changes based on new regulations can only be expected in still a few years.

However, in the post-communist transition countries such as the Ukraine, civic education is of special importance. The heritage of the past and the challenges in all spheres of life determine the specific situation in the Ukraine with respect to civic education.

People in the Ukraine are now in the process of learning how to be active, how to participate in social and political life, how to defend their views and opinions, and how to apply democratic values. Hence, the introduction and implementation of a sustainable civic education system in the Ukraine is vital. Much has already been achieved in this respect, not least through the implementation of numerous projects related to civic education, but there is still a long way to go, and a number of problems have yet to be addressed.

Civic education is not a mandatory subject in formal education curricula and is only partly addressed in national education standards and educational programmes. However the present humanities subjects are not or are only partly aimed at the development of skills and competencies demanded by modern civic education. In general, most teachers are not familiar with civic education, and the current system of retraining and in-service training for teachers does not include programmes or special courses in civic education designed to enable teachers to teach civic education in a professional way. Moreover, teachers are not capable of mastering active and interactive teaching methods, and many of them are still not used to leading classroom debates with students and accepting them as partners. The pedagogical universities do not train prospective teachers in civic education.

CONCLUSIONS

So the Ukraine as a young developing European country faces the double scale of problems in higher education: those of primary concern of general European education community and specifically Ukrainian ones. Thus, there should be created some highly intensive and efficient measures to speed up the integration of Ukrainian higher education into European “knowledge society” and “knowledge economy”.

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