

EDUCATION DIVERSITY AS AN INDICATOR OF SOCIETY POSITIVE DEVELOPMENT

Dear Readers,

In the present age, education plays a crucial role. Globalization, challenges of the knowledgeable society and the breakthrough of technological development are the main factors stimulating the diversification of education systems in a number of countries. Society and education become more variable. On the other hand, education may have a significant impact on society i.e. to provoke and promote its alterations. Recently, a strong need for new competencies has shown up. Preparations for changes, modern information management, skills in general science management and strategic planning, the need for permanent learning etc. are accepted as extremely important competencies. New tasks are allocated for all types and levels of schools concentrating on comprehensive school the basic mission of which is to train a personality having a broad academic knowledge, capable of lifelong learning, able to find his/her own place in life and be an active member of the community. First of all, new education goals require rearranging the educational process and content.

After restoring the independence in 1990, different alterations have been taking place in the Lithuanian education system. This period has faced plenty of changes in schools and the whole system of education e.g. school decentralization and management, reformation of schooling net and structure, new methods of financing, a changed system of Secondary Education Examination, new methods regulating the entrance to higher schools, new educational content and standards, the systems of teachers and executives' attestation etc. The educational establishments have seen endless possibilities of cooperation with foreign partners. Joining various international scientific, collaboration, mobility etc. projects opens up excellent opportunities to increase competencies of all education system participants. It can be affirmed that a similar situation can be met in the majority of countries in Central and Eastern Europe. The fundamental reforms of the educational system have been introduced in Latvia, Estonia, Poland and other countries of this region.

The free market conditions, globalization of production, rapid changes in technologies, market liberalization and building an information-based society create a highly competitive environment in all countries and make an immediate impact on employee qualification requirements and work methods. Training a qualified expert focused on the needs of the work market and aimed at developing practical skills can be accepted as one of the priorities of the education system. Ensuring high quality education has become a burning problem. Qualified education embraces not only internal business of the educational establishments; it is also a concern of the whole environment. To be satisfied with quality assurance, the society and social partners are actively involved. Quality management in education is admitted as a priority. To be certain about the society members' education that corresponds to the time requirements, the representatives of governmental and non-governmental organizations, enterprises, traditional religious communities, mass media as well as education experts, politicians, employers and other concerned people need to be summoned. Everyone must feel responsibility for the young generation and the future of the country. A similar form of collaboration is extremely important and most frequently produces positive results. M.Lang states that collaboration in educational reform assumes an atmosphere of professional autonomy realized through discourse, decentralization, and professional self-improvement in communities of practice. This implies a participatory process in a common information space that is different from the traditional view in a bureaucratic or expert hierarchy. It has to be discussed and justified in a social context of some sort of commons with shared meaning, values and rules (Lang, 2007).

However, it seems likely that progress in education is impossible without degradation which is an antipodal phenomenon. Along progress in education and its modernization, the degradation processes take place. Educational literature calls it *The Doctrine of the Degraded Education*. Despite all the efforts taken, the level of education is kept down in some countries. The number of preschool education institutions has gone down; the children's state of health and the quality of knowledge have considerably decreased. The prestige of higher schools is under damage. Unfortunately, the scopes

of education financing cannot ensure qualified education. The phenomenon of falsified education frequently emerges. The factors determining the latter happening are under discussion. The expert inquiry carried out in Lithuania in 2006, revealed such unfavourable circumstances of falsified education as a negative public attitude to school, lack of competencies of the executives dealing with education policy, bureaucracy, exaltation of learners' rights etc. (Lamanauskas, Aleknaitė, 2007).

An inescapable fact remains that an individual market of education exists. An axiom that the market easily accepts 'high' mastership is known. Another truth is also notorious – teachers (apart from rare exceptions) broke checking their personal educational activity and science (do the latter fields conform to one another). The process of broadening personal theoretical knowledge is very slow. What role does an uncompetitive teacher/lecturer play nowadays? Who is responsible if a teacher/lecturer fails to properly express him/herself under the circumstances of competition in the education market? Why a part of the universities are chosen by a large number of students whereas the other higher schools feel shortage of learners? There are plenty of questions to be fully answered.

Society and the education market gain greater diversity. More and more educational establishments appear in order to offer a wide spectrum of education services. A net of informal education institutions is actively progressing not only in Lithuania but also in other countries of the above mentioned region. The education 'field' is supported with the new theories that help with expansion of a modern education panorama (Lamanauskas, 2004). Obviously, such variety can be confusing, moreover, the barely accepted objects most frequently do not succeed in becoming the treasure of the educational society. The acknowledgement and investigation of the systemic education reality grow into a burning issue. Nevertheless, variant education is admitted as an index measuring how a certain political unity is focused on different educational needs and possibilities of society and its groups.

A few produced ideas will serve as a pretext for everyone interested in discussing the problems of education and thinking of the present education situation. Notwithstanding, this issue of serial publication includes articles dealing with different topics and formats i.e. from works displaying empirical research on methodology (Olga V. Balachevskaya etc.) to those debating the questions of youth intelligence and self-determination (Tatyana V. Masharova, Elena L. Syrtsova). This is a purposeful objective. The geopolitical situation in Lithuania has performed a role of a bridge between East and West. During the recent seventeen years, the one-way direction has predominated and been targeted on the West traditions in Lithuania. It is clear that education encountered a similar situation. The state of education in the region of Eastern Europe has been poorly discussed. Different international conferences held in Russia and Belarus disclose the need of exchanging information, experience, problems etc. The pedagogical traditions of Russia, Belarus and Ukraine considerably differ from those cherished in the West. The fact that only a small number of scientists working in the field of pedagogy in these countries publish their works in English proves that the real problems of communicating with one another exist. Life under similar conditions limits the possibilities of acknowledging the educational theory and practice in these countries.

It is believed that this volume of scientific articles will assist in solving the above introduced problems in one or another way and thus will have a positive impact on education development. We are expecting that this issue will be equally useful for the readers and writers of Eastern as well as of Western countries.

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