

# THE DOCTRINE OF DEGRADED EDUCATION: BETWEEN MYTHS AND REALITY

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## **In Lieu of Introduction**

The title of the article does not promise a positive attitude towards education. The reader can feel impressed that the only purpose of the author is the criticism of education with no positive points. However, this is a wrong position as any vivid detail can be clearly noticed. On the other hand, both positive and negative sides need to be considered and in this case, improvement and modernization are not the only ways. A steady increase in welfare is a myth, thus there is no need to discuss which area of life looks is described. When mentioning progress in education and modernization, we must face the other side of the road full of phenomena of degraded education which is not new in Lithuania. The last decade has generated discussions on this issue at different levels, although this is unfashionable and finally useless from different points of view. The most pressing problem is that the concept of degraded education has not been accepted as reality up to now. Therefore, the above introduced points should be plausibly argued.

## **What is Degraded Education?**

Before starting a brief discussion on the conception of degraded education, it should be taken into account that the meaning of degradation covers decline, deterioration, degeneration etc. Similar explanations are provided by almost any dictionary. Let's agree on the point that discussing a decline in education analyzing different constituent parts (lifelong learning, global education, information and knowledge-based society etc.) of this process is neither a modern nor rational idea. As a minimum, the author is at risk of staying in a position of a running opponent.

Nevertheless, let's have a look through two basic components of this doctrine – corruption and falsification of education. Presently, corruption (phenomenon of corruption) has been widely discussed. A part of the society claims it is simply a myth, whereas the others agree it is more than clear that corruption is taking leadership. Both positions are likely to be true. I support an idea this phenomenon cannot be absolute. However, long-lasting research has revealed that the scope of corruption is successfully growing and first of all, due to competence in this area of life. I submit that the scope of corruption is the exact indicator showing the need for competence in a certain country. I am more than confirmed there is no price for buying com-

petence. One can buy “a paper”, i.e. a school leaving certificate, a diploma but not competence which is not sold anywhere as must be personally acquired and developed. The reports presented by the United Nations only indicate that bribery and corruption make damage to universities and schools worldwide. Human indifference, materialization, self-prominence and desire for obtaining anything and everything anytime you like are the key stones of increasing the level of corruption. Thus, a question whether anti-corrupted education is an efficient means for dealing with the encountered problems arises.

Education falsification is the second element of the doctrine of degraded education closely related to corruption and other maladies. Falsification can be accepted as the process of distortion, manipulation and changing real things with the false ones. Such phenomenon reminds me of ‘erosion’ causing problems ‘inside’ the education system. Analogical thinking helps with understanding that we need to protect our society from such erosion. In this case, a suitable way of considering these problems should be taken into account. First, it seems to be a hard task as this occurrence is not properly examined. A more appropriate way is discussing things about the currently growing quality of education. However, despite an increasing amount of investments in the field of education, the world faces a tendency towards a decrease in the quality of education. The opponents are frequently settled down putting forward a rather simple proposition that the quality of education is a matter of an agreement. The falsification of education manifests in very different forms, including poorly coordinated curricula and different inadequacies of education when standards are ignored and national objectives and/or activities suffer from a lack of coordination. Some educational establishments usually strive for showing better results than those achieved in reality. In many instances, such situation is determined by a fierce competitive struggle, first of all, taking into account financial recourses. A part of countries strongly feel a shortage of intellectual and material resources which makes a direct impact on falsification. It is worth paying attention these things are not directly related. Quite a few ‘rich countries’ also face phenomena of falsification the scope of which seems to be rather wide.

The falsification of education closely correlates with different changes in the field of education which is very common in the so called post-soviet countries where during the last 20 years, improvements have been mainly promoted employing imported elements, i.e. learning from foreign experience the thoughtless sharing of which have resulted in numerous distortions and finally failed. An elementary axiom of systems theory suggests that every system makes attempts to reject an alien element. Sound words about modern school and modern education of the 21<sup>st</sup> century are very popular. However, reality faces a different situation – up-to-date education emits different lights. The teachers are not those showing their personal qualities of honour and morality and the lecturers of universities a lot more rarely can demonstrate their real authority. Information boom is approaching and the abundance of knowledge requires producing drastic changes in the education system. Making the current system highly intensive is not the right way to escape the encountered problems. The curricula used at schools are overloaded, schoolchildren often feel overstrained. The structure of values is seriously damaged and we become only pragmatic consumers. Educatedness cannot be the only subject-matter. The elimination of values makes it useless as a highly educated clever sneak will cause more danger to the society than a greenhorn. Education is primarily a world outlook. Although it sounds pretty traditionally, understanding good and evil is an exceptional quality of an educated person. What is more, there is no university that can help if you haven’t got God’s gift.

The Internet appears as a relevant factor stimulating the falsification of education. There is no doubt that the Internet provides a large number of positive things and advantages and that it acts as a powerful tool in the process of creating a knowledge-based society. Nevertheless, presently as never before, the Internet is contributing to an increase in education falsification. Almost every country can offer a huge amount of websites on the Internet with a possibility of obtaining works of different scientific qualification, including BA papers, MA papers and even

doctoral dissertations. Such websites extensively discuss the ways of how and why these scientific works are for sale. The number of doctoral dissertations is not that big, however, hardly anyone can deny the fact they are not obtained ordering the required papers. These websites are widely available in the main foreign languages such as English, French, Russian, etc. Obviously, the higher is the level of the research paper, the more professional is the qualification of one who operates such service. There is no way to deny that the employees of our universities are involved in these processes in one or another case. While browsing on the Internet, one can easily identify the websites disclosing information on conditions for how to prepare essays, synopses, term papers, BA and MA thesis, etc. Here is one of the examples providing that 'preparing and writing high quality scientific papers (term papers, BA, MA thesis) on educology, psychology, management, marketing, law, etc. is available'. It seems to be that the number of announcements containing such information is constantly increasing. It could be funny to play a joke whether it is the reason why the number of students is increasing. Moreover, do not forget those avoiding publicity the number of which even larger but they feel quietly and profitably employed. A part of the society believes that students do arduous work while the others have a vision that education and training are extremely efficient and their quality is steadily improving. This is so close to falsification in terms of the true sense of the word. One can have an opinion that there is no need to overemphasize, for example, undergraduate studies as after all, the process of learning goes on and turns into lifelong learning which recently has become a very common position. Isn't it a reason and original justification for diminishing the basic bachelor's degree giving inadequate attention and leaving them underestimated? Notwithstanding, different institutions of continuing education and retraining go next: pay money and everything will be O.K. After finishing BA studies, keep on retraining.

Early specialization is another no less important aspect. In some countries, including Lithuania attempts to introduce the model of profiled education were made which is another example of early specialization followed by intentions of staying behind students' interests. However, the mission of general education consists of a young personality to observe and accept the wholeness. Higher schools have preferred a narrow way of specialization which is particularly unwise as the fundamental mission of University as an educational establishment is to shape an opinion about the wholeness of the world. The universities providing education targeted for services are at risk of losing the mission cherished for centuries. A position that the basis for any society and its economic development is based on properly arranged higher education is widely accepted.

On the other hand, do we really need term papers or theses? There is no point to buy them as acquiring a diploma you wish is the best choice. One can find such examples numerous in Lithuania as well as in other countries. I personally have experience of observing how school-leaving certificates and diplomas were freely offered simply in underground stations and streets in some Russian cities. Thus, it is also worth wondering that some Lithuanian guy will obtain a diploma of any U.S. University. Similarly to the documents issued by Russian educational establishments, those of any foreign higher school or university cost only a few hundred dollars. In this case, the phenomena of plagiarism are worth mentioning as they are extremely widespread in the educational system and remain the burning issue in the majority of countries. The scope of plagiarism is growing and involves all institutions and areas of science as well as all stages of research and studying (scientists, undergraduate, graduate, post-graduate and doctoral students).

The above discussed two basic elements of the doctrine - corruption and falsification – are not the only attributes as there are a number of ridiculous things to be discussed searching for an appropriate solution to how to reduce negative impacts. The carried out research reveals that students' health is deteriorating, the spread of drug addiction and alcoholism as well as trafficking in young women are growing etc. Similar tendencies are characteristic of the majority

of countries and the reasons area both – objective and subjective. One thing is clear - education often takes place outside the political ideas but involves individual battle groups frequently resulting from personal sympathy or antipathy. Slide education policies are truly missing. These provisions cannot be all-embracing despite discussions on the universal and international aspects of education. Every country or region worldwide encounter specific problems and make efforts to solve those applying political measures.

The phenomenon of education falsification is clearly expressed and involves a great variety of problems, including education quality, shadow education, corruption in the education system etc. The before mentioned phenomenon comprises educational effectiveness and social justice.

### **Short Epilogue**

None of us are Alpha and Omega and thus cannot claim to any ultimate truth and wisdom. Some empathically say that education should solely operate on market conditions (liberal approach), whereas others argue that education should remain the exclusive property state (conservative approach). Both ‘camps’ fail to find a consensus. It seems to be unlikely that education can be developed on the basis of market mechanisms. In this case, education cannot respond to the great expectations of a certain nation, particularly a small one. On the other hand, education cannot be ‘simply dropped’ in the shell of conservatism. How to find the right balance? In any case, we cannot stay away and allow the devils ‘drowned’ positive things. We need to carry on discussing the faced problems. Though the battle between good and evil has been taking place for ages, today, the balance is clearly violated. Famous French philosopher Jean Antoine Condorcet declared that ‘there are two key causes of social turbulence – state / existence inequality band educational inequality’. Thus, save our careful, responsible and public character.

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