

# DISAGREEMENTS AND PARADOXES OF EDUCATION

**Vincentas Lamanuskas**  
University of Šiauliai, Lithuania  
E-mail: v.lamanuskas@ef.su.lt

Listen, watch and keep silence if you want to enjoy life...

**Heritage language**

## **Introduction**

Why the 21<sup>st</sup> century scholars start raising their voices while facing troubles and difficulties in the field of education. To identify the situation, it is worth having a closer look at the present schooling system. Post-modern life and education more and more frequently are coming into force. Superficiality becomes a common phenomenon. Only available regularly used and easily with no effort achieved attractive things are greatly appreciated. What is more, only minimal efforts are taken to gain a broader educational background. Quite a few countries display similar tendencies. On the other hand, education is frequently treated as a product or a kind of service. The laws of the wild market fail to get round this area of life. The chosen life style (including education) rather than the meaning of life and education itself often play a crucial role.

## **Living with Disagreements on Education!**

There is no need to be an expert perfectly knowing matters of education to find out not everything works in the system of education. Also, it seems to be clear that the evaluation of those working in the 'fields' of education cannot be rejected. I suppose the latter are not the majority as more and more frequently 'strangers' gain access to the education system. Discussions with the representatives of other countries have revealed that those currently studying educational subjects at universities usually fail to understand what the school is and what role they are going to play in this institution. The most important point is studying and receiving a diploma. Modern education encounters a large number of different problems the answers to which can be hardly found.

Thus, the very first disagreement is one between the necessities of providing a creative, socially changeable and alteration determining environment and the prevalence of applying verbal-boo-kish methods for educational purposes. Although teachers expend enormous efforts, a decision on the above mentioned disagreement is not reached and only a very slight hope can be seen it will be made in the future. A similar situation exists while generating a discussion on the need for 'having the lead' in the field of changes (alterations) and a conservative education system reflecting the already produced changes in life. To some purpose, a teacher (present) brings past (knowledge) for

the future (children). No one can deny that another disagreement can be noticed which is one between the need to purposefully pedagogically manage the development of every single personality and actually existing dissolution of the educational process (unreal separation) combined with the inconsistency of pedagogical impacts (teachers often work separately from one another on the basis of their personal knowledge and understanding). Despite taken into account all wishes the presently observed abundance of different guidelines and reorganizations remains broken into pieces. The suppression of such situation is a regular event proposing this is different. A number of produced theories about how to make the educational process more effective are left unrealized due to various reasons. First, schooling practice is something different. Theories lose their vitality. On the one hand, requirements for how to increase activities of learners as the main subjects of the educational process are imposed, whereas on the other - their status stays passive and similar to that of passive objects having a pedagogical impact which is objective truth as in the binary process of the interaction between learner and teacher, their activity has inverse correlation. High activity of one of the components holds down activity of the other. Systematically, any kind of education is more or less constraint. Education, as a rule, is organized, purposeful, coordinated (being coordinated) activity with objectives established by a certain society (the so called social order). However, a problem of how to achieve a proper balance between the elements of constraint and personal freedom occurs.

Though an emphasis is put on the necessity of making the educational process more intensive, nevertheless, extensive ways of improving it are actually prevailing, e.g. the number of lessons increases, different informal educational activities are undertaken etc. In this case, another disagreement between the continuous quantitative development of the education system and a consistent increase in education quality can be noticed. The latter process goes with the depreciation of evaluations (points and marks) and diploma. The analysis of university curricula in some countries reveals that these documents suffer from a lack of holistic planning and clear philosophical proposals. The introduced situation results in a compilation of incoherent courses and is particularly faced in the countries of Eastern and Central Europe, the places where unified education has prevailed for a long time. The rapid diversification of education is a common occurrence often taking the wrong move. Influenced by the regularities of the market, in the name of survival, schools usually sacrifice the quality of their activities in a broad sense.

'Buying' diploma is another related problem. Quite a few discussions have been generated and will likely be held in a number of countries in the future. The Internet is full of web sites offering similar kinds of services with the established prices. Thus, the market imposes the rules of the game. Supply and demand always go together.

Despite the fact that a continuous process of increasing the volumes of scientific and social information is taking place, however, limited terminology on learning/studying used by educational establishments is regularly observed. Moreover, the Bologna process requires cutting the standing of studies. No attention is paid to the evaluation of the promoted idea. The pace of life necessitates growth in any area thus leaving behind rivals etc. Nevertheless, the logic of life clearly shows that when gaining one thing you lose another. There is no question of getting anything you want here and now. Everything has a price, and therefore the only question about how expensive, when and to whom money will be paid needs to be answered.

Disagreement between an objective need for a continuous improvement on educational content (is there anyone who will dare to say it is needless) and a traditional pedagogical requirement for ensuring the stability of educational content is another field of the initiated discussion. A try at improving things is closely related with the extensive development of education, for example, more and more alternative course books and information sources for learners are prepared which disintegrates the content of education. Disagreement between the increased abstractness of education influenced by growing theoretical knowledge and the necessity of improving practical learners' training should be mentioned. An opinion that the process of learner/student training is too much theoretically supported can be frequently heard. In this case, a huge number of reasons could be suggested.

Employers also often complain that the young generation coming onto the market is not properly trained. However, the other side of the medal exists. Some of the teachers either have no

connection with practice or it is very weak. Therefore, the only decision to be taken is to prepare the would-be specialists on theoretical grounds. Disagreement between the increased degrees of education and the importance of educational individualization in order to show the immanent powers of every child (learner) should be considered. In most instances, comprehensive schools keep these powers unnoticed and unexpanded. To some purpose, the U.S.A. always refers to the priority of making education individual. Therefore, in this case, a question of how to achieve a balance between mass and elite education is faced. Every country is confronted with problems common for a certain area.

An interesting disagreement occurs between objectively growing public demand for having creative, highly qualified teachers/lecturers and limited possibilities of satisfying such need. As mentioned above, more and more schools fail to choose strongly motivated personalities able to get on with pedagogical work. First of all, this should be a concern for those formulating educational policy at different levels.

Information sources suggest that regarding education, a public opinion of quite a few countries is highly positive and this makes us feel happy. However, on the other side, regularly disseminated information that public gladly accept provided education seems to be too provoking in order to hear the opinions of colleagues from other countries and to realize that work at school becomes more and more arduous. During the last few years, several countries have faced strikes and protest actions organized by teachers' organizations. On the one hand, public requirements for increasing teachers' professional skills are constantly growing, whereas on the other, individual teachers' possibilities of 'catching the right pace of life' remain objectively limited (time spent for self-training decreases). Different types of attestation, teacher training etc. prevent from concentration on the main subject – education in the classroom. Society has an abstract position on the issue that their children should be provided with an appropriate background, and therefore it has cherished a false hope for versatile harmonious education. With reference to such situation, education players neglecting control functions and ability to think often transfer all subjects and create adverse circumstances and heavy physical and emotional overload. This is a frequent discussion held by physicians asserting that students and teachers' state of health is getting worse. The so called state owned comprehensive schools fail to provide the learners with expected education. To solve these problems and compensate misfortunes, private tutors are called for help.

Another disagreement is worth being discussed. Education requires more and more investment, particularly reformation of education systems (for example, the U.S.A. spends approx. 300 billion dollars annually). Nevertheless, different international investigations reveal that education quality is being reduced. For instance, presently, Russia more and more often comes across the doctrine of degrading education. Finally, from a financial point of view, various types of reformed education are recipient. The forthcoming result can be hardly predicted. Time is also an important factor as negative after-effects can be visible following the required amount of time. In this case, new reforms are usually introduced and the cycle is repeated again.

Another disagreement is extremely controversial and can be either accepted or rejected. Civilization is not being created by bright students who were brilliant at all subjects studied at school and not by those awarded gold medals, but by ordinary learners who were often ignored by teachers and never had a chance to study at a college or university.

Certainly, even more objectively existing disagreements can be discussed. However, the problem is not the one they cannot be properly resolved as first of all, they need to be identified and only at a later stage – possible ways of finding an appropriate solution should be developed.

### **Common Education Paradoxes**

The above discussed paradoxes are closely related to the so called education paradoxes worth being looked over.

The first paradox to be mentioned is the one that human have different rudiments of physical and physiological experience, and thus their education entirely depends on them. When children are 'placed' in the same school to be properly educated, even pressure on them cannot help with achieving good results. Parents prefer their children should be tutored in subjects that hardly ever will bring success in the future rather than look for ways of developing their innate abilities. On the one hand, these are additional income, whereas on the other – expenses and health problems. In another way, tutors are not always teachers having necessary qualifications. Tutoring is an old phenomenon widespread in all countries at all times. The conception is similar at all points – a person providing a learner with additional lessons on the subjects difficult to be acquired at school (the learner is either has no wish or is not interested in dealing with learning things). The carried out research points out three main criteria for taking a tutor: preparation for the final exams, to make the taken course more systematic and to better acknowledge a particular subject. The latter involves the second paradox – motivation which is the driving force of teaching (learning). In an opposed way, motivation may 'prevent' from the teaching (learning) process. The genetic system determines the purpose of self-realization. One type of activity is easily accepted and stimulated, the other – ignored (only obeyed and imitated) and the third type is not suitable to perform any action despite all possible didactic methods and even coercive measures. In this case, the effect achieved by the tutors is temporary and has no sense. This event is stimulated by a policy of general education inadequate for the existing situation. It should be taken into account that a teacher is one of the oldest professions. However, like thousands of years ago, s/he tells stories, explains ideas, imposes penalties, encourages and makes evaluations. Although psychologists agree that children's cognitive activity in the classroom plays a crucial role, teachers suggest it must be under control and at minimum expenditure (economists' point of view). But what is the right option when classrooms in schools are overloaded? Finally, who will dare to point out the exact number of children in the classroom in case we admit that individual education is the most effective? The number of learners in the majority of African schools makes 45 – 50 students. In some countries of the continent, the amount of those is even higher and reaches 70. Though the situation is different in other countries, still, it depends on the variety of circumstances, not only on economical potential.

One more paradox should be explained. A teacher plays a leading role which is reality that cannot be denied either by the wide society (masses) or politicians and other members of public (elite). Nevertheless, the fact of teachers' remuneration for the work they do shows different. There are only a few countries where teacher's job is a highly-paid one.

Systemic paradox should also be highlighted. All elements of the education system have plenty of drawbacks, and therefore the whole system as such contains defects. A partial modernization of the system has no sense (following the principles of system functioning, any implant will be rejected). Any system can be replaced with the one that seems to be more attractive. Those responsible for education policy and execution often choose the easiest way based on steeling ideas or plagiarism, i.e. they combine different reforms and put the models developed in other countries into practice. Nonetheless, it does not mean that the same model gladly accepted in one country will be successfully adopted in the other. Then, we are proud of how clever we are and what great our achievements can be. Such 'implants' very frequently fail in succeeding and turn into 'horrible' disasters.

Forming classes in schools concerning age can also be treated as an intriguing paradox. When a part of schoolchildren get bored, the others encounter difficulties. Consequently, the new methods of teaching (for example, 'active' methods of teaching) are introduced. Why not to form classes taking into account cognitive abilities, thus leaving behind this problem forever? Establishing the terminology of general education is another ambiguity. Why must all learners 'sit in the classroom' from bell to bell all year round until they have graduated from school? Setting an individual pace should be a more rational decision and help with gaining formal education at different time of studies.

## Epilogue

Life and education with no problems is a hardly acceptable idea. However, a wish to stay at a distance in order not to face the existing problems is one of most awful disasters presently seen in the education system. It might be money can solve all problems as according to Marx, 'They have by no means merely one mode of affirmation, but rather that the distinct character of their existence, of their life, is constituted by the distinct mode of their affirmation. In what manner the object exists for them, is the characteristic mode of their *gratification*. Wherever the sensuous affirmation is the direct annulment of the object in its independent form (as in eating, drinking, working up of the object, etc.), this is the affirmation of the object... By possessing the *property* of buying everything, by possessing the property of appropriating all objects, *money* is thus the *object* of eminent possession. The universality of its *property* is the omnipotence of its being. It is therefore regarded as an omnipotent being. Money is the *procurer* between man's need and the object, between his life and his means of life...' (The Power of Money, Marx, 1844) I strongly reject this idea. The problems of education cannot be solved only on financial grounds. Everyone figures out that vast and broad knowledge as well as full understanding are required to overcome the encountered problem. Education is not a stable system made of insecure and poorly defined components. To find it more reliable, it must contain excess supply, i.e. guided by the principle of redundancy. More investments in education are necessary so that to expect at least minimal results and it makes no account that this idea passes over the presently prevailing liberal economic logics.

**Vincentas Lamanauskas** Professor, Siauliai University, Natural Science Education Research Centre, 25-119 P. Višinskio Street, LT- 76351, Siauliai, Lithuania.  
Phone: +370 687 95668.  
E-mail: lamanauskas@projektas.lt  
Website: <http://www.lamanauskas.projektas.lt>