Educational changes vs school functioning

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The article raises the issue of the impact of educational changes on the functioning of school. It is noted that in international documents, education is seen as a means of overcoming differences between global and local, general and individual, material and spiritual, traditional and modern. Emphasis is placed on the importance of education in relation to the role of school in the formation of a knowledge society. Educational tasks are revealed, including preparation of a person for lifelong learning, cooperation with public and parents. Emphasis is placed on teacher training as drivers of school reforms.

Keywords: *educational changes, knowledge society, lifelong learning, teacher, school reform.*

In international reports and documents, education is presented as a means of overcoming tensions and discrepancies between the global and the local, the universal and the individual, the material and the spiritual, the traditional and the modern, the temporary and the long-term. In the report *The world ahead: our future in the making*, F. Mayor emphasizes that strategies of human development giving priority to education facilitate the noticeable betterment of life; therefore, lifelong learning for all will be one of the basic guidelines of culture contract. It is a great challenge that needs to change into a great agenda of the 21st century [...] of civic education and true equality of opportunity for all *[5]*. Education, which is interpreted as a means of establishing both the spiritual and the material realm, should protect an individual from many anti-values, negative occurrences and threats of human existence.

In modern days, the detachment between the increasing complexity of the world and our ability to cope with it is becoming more apparent. The advance in our abilities can not keep pace with the intensification of man-inspired entanglements. The magnitude and pace of transformations as well as the build-up of information and knowledge lead to tiredness and confusion. They often result in the inability to comprehend and assess situations, cognitive, ethical and aesthetic relativism, and losing the footholds in learning

and estimating *[10]*. This confusion of the modern individual reaffirms the need to build a knowledge-based society. The primary determining agent of the rising society is access to data and information as well as competences related to processing information into knowledge, effective distribution and practical application *[17]*.

Knowledge and education in shaping the learning society

Creating a knowledge-based learning society magnifies the complexity of educational problems. The questions that arise are: Can education define the new role of school in building and serving the knowledge-based society? Would that lead to the marginalization of the role of education? What educational innovations must be introduced in order for the expectations of the learning society to be satisfied?

Creating a knowledge-based society requires promoting new and basic skills and attitudes, ensuring a better access to education, in particular to lifelong learning, and using protective social strategies. This society emerges from the merging of four independent factors: (1) «producing» knowledge, or scientific achievements, which are the result of scientific research; (2) conveying knowledge using educational and training systems; (3) popularizing knowledge using innovative information and communication technologies; (4) applying knowledge for innovation and technological advancement *[2, pp. 20–21]*.

Thanks to changes occurring in the world due the dissemination of information and network technology throughout societies and economies, new opportunities for generating, obtaining, storing, and conveying information and knowledge arise. There is a new paradigm of thinking based on systems and networks that emphasizes the connections, linkages and the complexity of relations in the net. Creating new knowledge using new methods is a challenge for science, economy and education *[18, pp. 55–56]*.

In an OECD report entitled *Knowledge management in the learning society*, knowledge is divided into four categories:

1. *know-what* refers to knowledge about facts and it is close to what is considered information; it may transmitted via data and bits;

2. *know-why* refers to knowledge about principles and laws of nature, both in the human mind and society;

3. *know-how* refers to skill or ability to do something. It pertains to worker skills but it also plays a part

in the higher level of managing and generating knowledge by scientists;

4. *know-who* refers to those who have knowledge and it depicts that knowledge. It also refers to social relationships and communication with outside experts.

Knowledge leads to wisdom, which is one of the dianoethic virtues highlighted by Aristotle in his grouping of intellectual virtues. The principal issue here is that the essence of wisdom lies not in the assumption that an individual has possessed all the necessary knowledge of that which should be known, but in fact that he/she has a rather explorative approach to the world, which is ceaselessly being discovered and is aware of the limitations of knowledge in view of the Socratic belief *I know that I know nothing*. Wisdom, therefore, is conditioned by knowledge of the unknown. In that sense conscious ignorance is the way to achieve wisdom.

Rather, wisdom is an attribute which an individual may attain en route to his/her own personal development. Thus, another important educational task is to instill independent, critical and creative thinking in an individual. This would enable him/her to pose problem solutions, learn and explore reality from multiple perspectives, and foster independent and critical thinking *[9, pp. 501–514]*. The individual is expected to be capable of appreciating the achievements of others, not succumbing to suggestions, rejecting unauthentic role models, predicting the consequences of own actions, as well as engaging in constructive introspection. Therefore, it may be stated that the core of wisdom is the acquired and the constantly verified general learning culture as well as noticing the importance of issues and understanding their context *[7]*.

Education tasks

In this context, one important task of education is to prepare the individual for lifelong learning and foster the capability for independent learning through:

– giving motivation for lifelong learning;

– teaching the skill of assessing one's own learning needs and the ability to ask for help;

– developing the skill to select the method of education or the type of training to fulfill these needs;

– acquiring meta-cognitive abilities – meditating on individual thinking and the ability to adapt to different learning styles and strategies;

– fostering independent learning in different settings (work, leisure, home) other than the institution of formal education;

– acquiring the ability to gain information and knowledge via information technologies *[3, p. 64]*.

The primary task of education should amount to training an individual, who would feel as a citizen of Europe and the global community and at the same time would focus on his/her personal growth at every stage of his/her life. Thus, education should serve the good of an individual and the community of which he/she will be a part.

Since the direction of the contemporary changes points away from information to knowledge gained by an individual pursuing wisdom, another essential task of education is to develop competences that constitute the basis for selection, synthesis and evaluation of the vastness of information and knowledge as well as the choice of accurate cognitive strategies and life orientations which enrich humanity. It is not only the economic goals but also the shared values of the European civilizations that should constitute the foundation strategy with regard to educational policy.

In order to prepare students to smoothly function in the dynamically changing world, school must become more capable of developing cognitive competences and more effectively develop social competences, and create authentic atmosphere conducive to educational dialogue of all its subjects *[8]*. One important school task is to develop learner competences that constitute the basis for selection, synthesis and assessment of information and the chaotically accumulating knowledge as well as the selection of adequate cognitive strategies and life orientations that enrich humanity. The processes of intellectual education in school must be accompanied by the development of attitudes, value systems and identity of the learners. What is more, the intellectual education should also ensure to preserve the essential axiological themes in education; otherwise, individuals may be deprived of moral sensitivity. Assisting the student in updating his/her unique aptitudes is the foundation of education.

A new range of school tasks emerges from the new cultural situation. These tasks expose the need to equip an individual for lifelong learning and developing self-study abilities through:

– developing the skill of assessing individual learning needs and seeking assistance in this matter;

– developing the skill of selecting the means of education or the types of training in order to satisfy these needs;

– arousing motivation for learning throughout life;

– acquiring meta-cognitive skills (thinking about own thinking, the skill of adapting to different learning styles and strategies);

– developing the skill of independent learning in different settings (work, entertainment, home) other than in formal educational organizations;

– learning the skill of acquiring information and knowledge using technological and computer tools *[3, p. 64]*.

The model school seen as a learning organization embraces issues of the local community and is willing to cooperate with the surrounding. It aims to provide optimal conditions for development to all individuals functioning within and it sees students as active participants of the learning process while equipping them with the necessary tools to function in Europe and throughout the world. The model utilizes technological advancements in the learning process, is innovative by nature and accounts for the need to modernize and seek creative solutions. Also, it encourages teachers to do an in-depth analysis of their own work.

Collaboration with the local community can significantly enhance school life. Therefore, an effort should be made to help the school create opportunities for this cooperation. The different aspects of collaboration with parents should also be clearly defined.

It is recommended that the school should monitor and analyze the results of its performance as it can not function effectively without proper diagnosis, vision and development scheme. Modern methods of administration and independent curriculum design that take into account the current affairs in the local community, nation and the world are imperative. What is also important is the collaboration between a teachers board, a school board and parents in the context of the organizational development of school and educational and nurture strategies *[14, pp. 71–72]*.

Teachers as pillars of a school undergoing reform

Teachers who exhibit creativity, commitment and involvement in the process of changes are the pillars of the modern school. It is important to thoroughly prepare teachers to function in the changing school and to build a knowledge-based society. It is based not only on acquiring profession-related competences but also on developing a peculiar attitude toward culture, which is conducive to student development and attainment of goals that result from education reform. Teachers hold the responsibility for preparing students to ask questions, identify and solve problems, exercise self-control, reflect on own actions, plan the future and learn to cope with stress and failures. They become student counselors and guides through the areas of knowledge and the meanders of the complex reality *[13; 16, pp. 24–32]*.

Preparing the teacher to creatively cope with the changeable, uncertain and diverse educational situations in a reformed school requires changes in their initial and professional training. Teachers should be provided with a high level of training to fulfill the essential functions and tasks in school as an educating and nurturing environment. What is also essential is subject knowledge, the knowledge about education and nurture, reflective practical experiences, a high level of general education, training for multifaceted development, participation in many different areas of professional and public life and preparation for active participation in nation development *[12, pp. 328–329]*.

Shaping a new school model in the context of the currently observed organizational diversity and diversity of school management methods should become a common goal of teachers, students and their parents. Achieving the ability to self-develop, which encompasses individual aspects, cooperation in the teacher board and organization as a whole are a measure of a modernized school.

While shaping the general vision of a school it is important to consider several assumptions.

1. An individual should be provided with learning conditions that would suit his/her own desires and abilities in every period of his/her life, from the earliest years to advanced old age. He/she should also have the possibility to design his/her own program of study.

2. All students should be provided with a wide resource of sustainable knowledge and operational skills. They should also be made aware of the need and develop a habit of lifelong learning as well as the skill of independent acquisition, evaluation and selection of information.

3. It is vital to fully recognize the aptitudes of each student and provide the conditions and means facilitating optimal development since each individual (excluding dysfunctional cases) exhibits certain aptitudes, which the school should reveal and develop.

4. A teacher, together with his/her knowledge and pedagogical qualifications, is a significant agent determining the quality of teaching and educational function of a school; therefore, he/she should be provided with the optimal learning, training and development conditions as well as optimal work conditions and adequate remuneration.

5. School as the main educational institution should collaborate more closely with other educational institutions, which relates to the expansion of the educational, guardian and diagnostic tasks in which it is engaged *[4]*.

6. Schools should become centers of knowledge and sources of information open all year round, which members of the local community could use throughout their life *[1]*.

7. During the process of education the needs of students with different learning styles should be met and all types of intelligences should be stimulated.

8. The best universal teaching, research and learning methods should be employed and the latest technology should be used in the educational process.

9. The community should be treated as a source of gaining knowledge, where each student is also becoming a teacher.

10. Assessment in school should be modified it should play an important role together with teacher assessment self-assessment and peer assessment.

11. In the process of nurturing, school should closely collaborate with the parents of a student in order to help him/her in the integral development of all aspects of his/her personality.

School – teaching and development organization

Considering the aforementioned assumptions and activities in the didactic-educational work as well as providing the necessary means for their realization should result in establishing a school that would be perceived as a «teaching and development organization», would be characterized by more equal educational opportunities, the increase in influence of extramural educational institutions, expansion of distance-learning, the narrowing of the gap between intramural and extramural educational forms, youth and adult forms of education, perception of education as a type of an investment and a source of one's full development.

The goal of a school as a learning organization is to continually expand the possibilities of shaping one's own future.

The functioning elements of the learning and developing organization are an effective tool that enhances its quality. In light of this school should be

perceived as an interactive system consisting of five variables including: (1) the outside surrounding of school (community and administrative authorities); (2) the value of school life (ideologies, learning and nurture theories, values recognized by teachers and students); (3) structures (task distribution, decision making, organization); (4) interpersonal relationships (subjectivity, dialogue, respecting one's rights); (5) action strategies in areas such as management, learning, decision making, quality control, etc *[6]*.

The prerequisite of change in school is fulfilling its real needs, developing a sense of achievement, developing teacher competences and their personal mastery *[19]* as well as adequate leadership and change management *[11; 15]*. The theory of change also exposes the value of friendship relationship in school as well as the pedagogical and organizational culture of both school and the teacher.

Conclusion

1. The image of a uniform educational system is changing as a result of the socio-cultural changes. There are new developmental and existential needs of an individual that emerge; his/her activity and autonomy are evolving. These changes exert pressure on the education system to prepare individuals for effective functioning in the new socio-political realities, mastering new attitudes and skills that develop conceptual, critical and creative thinking, and acquiring new knowledge and cultural value. The educational preparation of an individual should produce in him the ability to make the right choices defined by values as well as cognitive style and emotions.

2. As new social challenges set course for school, a functioning modern, flexible and open educational process is a necessary prerequisite of education provided in the reformed school. This translates into assigning the highest priority to attitude development, openness to the world, values before skills and information, learning to think and utilize knowledge, and humanization of the educational process.

3. Another important task is the adequate preparation of teachers to function in the changing education and building a society of knowledge. This has implications for both teachers and educational policy: transforming knowledge into the primary productive factor, improving the overall quality of education, culture and organizations, ensuring access to the global information network, actively engaging teachers in all reformatory endeavors and encouraging lifelong learning.

4. They are the ones who can help us avoid the threats resulting from the changing world. The extent to which young individuals – or graduates – can affirm the desire for self-fulfillment in various areas of activity is a measure of the value of school and it is a proof of professionalism of teachers.

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Іоланта ШЕМПРУХ
Освітні зміни vs функціонування школи

У статті порушено питання впливу освітніх змін на функціонування школи. Зазначено, що у міжнародних документах освіту розглядають як засіб подолання розбіжностей між глобальним та локальним, загальним та індивідуальним, матеріальним та духовним, традиційним та сучасним. Акцентовано на значенні освіти щодо ролі школи у формуванні суспільства знань. Розкрито освітні завдання, серед яких підготовка особистості до навчання протягом життя, співпраця з громадскістю і батьками. Наголошено на підготовці вчителів як рушіїв шкільних реформ.

Ключові слова: *освітні зміни, суспільство знань, навчання протягом життя, вчитель, шкільна реформа.*