

Role of educational policies and philosophical thought on education in building functional, stable and prosperous knowledge society



Dragor Zarevski

*Privat Associate professor, Faculty of Philosophy
Ss. Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje
dragorzarevski@gmail.com*

Abstract

The rapid development of science and technology, and in particular the rapid development of information technology, leads inevitably to the revision of the basic economic paradigm globally. Social economic instability of modern humanity, but also large economic and social-political turbulences, are determined by the essential economic and political trends immanent to the current civilization. Basic researches in philosophy, and in social and economic sciences, allow us to sketch the outlines of a future postindustrial society of knowledge. According to such research, knowledge and education will represent a major resource and a key driver of the economy and the overall economic political progress within the future society. It is extremely important for the scientific potentials, both at local and global levels, to be aimed at outlining the modalities of promoting education, i.e., directing the scientific potentials towards strengthening the education and knowledge as essential resources and a key driver of the economy in the knowledge society.

Key words: education policy, philosophy of education, knowledge society, knowledge economy

Introduction

The desire of man to find out who he really is and to understand the world in which he lives is an authentic, genuine human instinct, as old as mankind. Exit point of the man's desire for knowledge is founded on his need for knowledge as a means for survival in a variable and harsh reality, and on his quest for knowledge and understanding as a creative act. Cognition, as a spiritual - creative, and at the same time practical - expedient act, is always unique and indivisible in itself. Knowledge is an integral part of the individual who possesses it and, accordingly, it is his inherent, essential attribute, i.e., immanent segment of his integrity. With the development of human civilization and culture, accumulated knowledge is transferred to future generations in expedient, meaningful and organized way. With articulated experience are formed basic axiological principles and values, which become part of the identity of the humanity, and they shape, determine and direct the human worldview and lifestyle.

So, with education, as a fundamental human and social activity, knowledge, values and traditions are transmitted from generation to generation, and at the same time through the process of education itself, with conceiving, planning and preparing the educational activities and through its evaluation, knowledge on certain issues and values that are important to people is reappraised and determined.

The philosophy of education is a practical philosophical discipline that explores, studies and promotes the basic principles of education. It perceives and studies education in its wholeness and thoroughness. Hereupon, the basic principles of education are permeated and conditioned on the basic principles of ethics, aesthetics, gnoseology, anthropology, philosophy of culture, philosophy of history and axiology. Philosophy of education perceives education in unity with the basic principles of humanity and existence in general.

In its position as a science of the basic principles of education, philosophy of education has made a big impact on establishment and development of a number of social positive sciences and disciplines that study education. In this regard, many of the concepts and much of the knowledge founded within the philosophy of education represent the starting point of modern multidisciplinary research on educational issues.

With the development of human civilization and culture, educational activity is advanced too, and at the same time its social role and responsibility are increased. Accordingly, the philosophy of education, as a science that investigates and sets the basic postulates of the theory of education, more than ever before in human history, is faced with the obligation of having to conceive, define and give pedagogical meaning to the basic

principles of development of society, the panhuman cultural existence, basic guidelines for the development of civilization, and above all, the fundamental principles of humanity as the essence of human identity.

Social problems that modern education is facing, i.e., modern educational systems, actually represent basic essential problems of modern human civilization. Most essential issues of today are reconceived at conceptualizing the education. Accordingly, solutions should be the result of a serious, systematic, multidisciplinary research that will allow us to design a well-founded and sustainable education system that will be a foundation of building a self-sustainable and humane society of the future.

The challenges of building a postindustrial society and the role of education in the current socio-economic transition

Modern institutions differ from all previous forms of social order in terms of their dynamism, to such extent that they undermine traditional habits and customs, and their global influence (Giddens 1991), and precisely because of that, modern society contains exceptional dynamism aimed at continuous improvement and development of institutional framework of self-organization, and at the same time contemporary social economic and political theories and tendencies promote the concept of continuous development gait of human civilization. The impact of the new information revolution is felt in an increasing number of areas of human life. Processing of information becomes one of the determining factors in the economy and in all areas of our social life (Flecha 1999). Furthermore, Castells says "while information and knowledge always by definition represent an essential element of any process of scientific research and technological development, today, for the first time in the history of new knowledge, it is primarily applied in generating and processing of knowledge and information" (Castells 1999: 45), and thusly the development of information technology created conditions within the contemporary cultural pattern for building a qualitatively new relationship regarding knowledge, information and education. Conceptual redefining of the global cultural matrix modifies the principles of self-developing of our humanity and changes the essence of what we are (Willis 1999). Modern information technologies can be applied within the educational process in many ways, and their implementation in the context of modern education, including institutionalized regular classes, represents an educational priority without whose realization, improvement and modernization of the educational

process in modern conditions of life are not possible. The deepest and the most essential human cultural and spiritual values are transmitted through communication, so it is clear that any communication form results either from the dominant communication context or from technology, whereas each form or context encourages the development of complementary dominant analytical framework, and that the form, context and frame generate derived social philosophy or belief system (Lorimer 1994). Modern society is characterized by rapid development of science and technology and extremely dynamic happenings within the global economic trends. Thanks to the development of science and technology, structural transformation of national economies takes place. Economic science, social sciences, and of course, philosophy, try to perceive and investigate the reasons for dynamic turbulent events that stir the global economy, but at the same time they stir up modern global society. Rapid development of science and technology, development of information technology, increasing the opportunities for automating many manufacturing processes in industrial production, the accelerated development of means of communication and transport should allow fine, favorable climate for a stable development of world economy, but instead of calm and stable development, the world economy is faced with many challenges and crises. Researches within the economic science, social sciences and philosophy indicate that our global society goes through a deep structural transformation of the essential principles of governance, i.e., basic change of the economic paradigm is yet to come. Transformation of the economic paradigm can be very dramatic as it was the case with the Neolithic agricultural revolution when agriculture became basic economic activity. Small communities of hunter-gatherers who were constantly moving in search of food were transformed after the Neolithic agricultural revolution into communities with permanent habitat, after that were established villages as permanent settlements, and in the further course of historical development the cities were formed too. After the Neolithic agrarian revolution, man's life, i.e., mankind itself permanently changed, and these changes have enabled the development of culture, literacy, spiritual and creative activity. Second major change in the economic paradigm began to realize at the end of the XVIII century with the first industrial revolution. With the industrial revolution, mankind stepped into industrial era (Stearns 2012), which enabled human civilization to grow, according to the criteria of that time, into a highly developed functional technological civilization. In the second half of the XX century, i.e., at the beginning of the XXI century, with the information revolution (Hanson 2008) and the rapid development of information technology, we gradually step into the post-industrial society (Cohen 2008). The development of information technology, accelerated automation of industrial production,

construction of 3D printers (which can print three-dimensional objects), nano technology (Gordijn and Cutter 2013), as well as certain breakthroughs in the development of artificial intelligence, have permanently diversified the environment in which the global society will exist and develop.

What will be the main features of the new global structure of the economy, and what will be its main attributes, i.e., characteristics and regularities, is a subject of study of economic science, social sciences and philosophy.

Considering the dynamic social-economic tendencies characteristic of the current civilization moment, it is extremely difficult to perceive the big picture of global transformation process, i.e., the global socio-economic political transition. Within economic sciences, social sciences and philosophical research, there are several theories that are attempting to comprehend the principles of the current social and economic change and to predict the results of current processes of transformation of society and the economy, thus enabling the humanity to be properly prepared for the era that is forthcoming. The most impressive and most influential theories within the broader scientific discourse concerning the dramatic socio-economic trends are concepts arguing that modern humanity has stepped into a new development era, the era of knowledge society founded on knowledge economy. Great American scientist Daniel Bell, promoter of the term "knowledge society", believes that the future society, the knowledge society, will be based on the post-industrial economy (Bell 1976), where the workforce is concentrated in the tertiary sector, and where the carriers of the society development are institutions and individuals, that in a certain way, create and manage knowledge i.e., they are oriented towards scientific research, technology development and other creative activities. The influential French sociologist Alain Touraine highlights the importance of the tertiary sector in the economy of knowledge society (Touraine 1971). Touraine, agreeing with the concepts of Daniel Bell, says that by rationalization of manual labor in the production through process automation of industrial production, workers in the secondary sector in most cases will lose their jobs, because the function that they perform, i.e., duty that they carry out, will be taken over by an automated machine type of production (Touraine 2007). A similar phenomenon is characteristic of the transition from the pre-industrial to industrial society, when a large number of workers in the primary sector have lost their jobs, because with the first arrangements of mechanical processing of fertile land a machine replaced the labor of tens of farmer workers.

Influential Spanish philosopher Manuel Castells points out that the new economic social conditions, which he names informatics society, that will result from the current

civilization moment, will be based on the technology of production of knowledge, information processing and symbolic communication (Castells 2000). According to the American scientist Andy Hargreaves, continued creation and upgrading of knowledge is a major source of productivity within the knowledge society, where the creation of knowledge is an essential form of the efforts made and the production itself (Hargreaves 2003). According to the American scientist Robert B. Reich, innovations, innovativity and the creation of new knowledge represent the basic assumptions of the production method characteristic of future society (Reich 2012). Furthermore, the innovation and creativity represent the basic assumption of success of any economic entity. Famous German thinker Helmut Willke said that in a society of knowledge, structures and processes of material and symbolic reproduction are pervaded with activities based on knowledge, so that the information processing, symbolic analysis and cooperation of experts have a primary significance (Willke 2007). Accordingly, investments in education, professional development, software solutions and increasing the efficiency of management are the essential factors of success of certain economic or social economic entity within the society of knowledge.

The main feature of the economy immanent to the knowledge society, i.e., basic feature of the knowledge economy, is that knowledge is a key resource of production, i.e., the fact that knowledge and creativity represent the propellants of overall economic and social development. Basic principles characteristic of the knowledge society and the knowledge economy are: fostering creativity and dissemination of knowledge, properly educated and trained workforce that is constantly retrained, effective assimilation of existing knowledge by the economic and social entities, allowing them to adjust to the emerging social conditions, and building of functional extra efficient information infrastructure. According to the famous American manager Thomas A. Stewart, there are three main principles characteristic of the knowledge economy: the progress and development of knowledge economy of each individual and social entity in a given economic ambient is based on the productive use of knowledge, as well as on constantly conceiving and implementing appropriate business strategies based on knowledge as a fundamental resource; the intellectual property represents a more important possession of a certain social or physical entity compared to the physical, and even to the financial resources which he has possesses; knowledge is basic carrier of the value of every single product that is created, sold or bought (Stewart 2003). The influential New Zealand and American theoretician of management and manager David J. Teece emphasizes that economic and social subjects within the economy of

knowledge will not be directed towards acquiring tangible property or to strengthening their material potentials, but to the basic value itself, i.e., a to a competitive comparative advantage that represents intellectually creative capacity of the economic entity (Teece 2002). The essential feature of successful social and economic entities in the knowledge economy is to quickly and effectively adapt to the existing conditions dictated by the external factor and continuous creative reconceiving and restructuring of self activity. According to prominent American Austrian economist Peter F. Drucker, wealth of economic and social factors in the knowledge economy depends on their ability to effectively apply knowledge, intellectual and creative potential that is available, as well as to continuously increase and improve their intellectual and creative potential, i.e, to raise the quantum of qualitative and applicable knowledge at their disposal (Drucker 1970). Given that creative human potential is basically unlimited, it can be accordingly concluded that the knowledge economy has resources that are not limited.

Mutual interference and dependence between the economic and educational system in the post-industrial society of knowledge

According to the recent research in the field of economic sciences, social sciences and philosophy, there is a perception that the economy which is innate to the new nascent society will be based on intellectual creative potential of man and mankind as a basic resource and as a vital driving principle. In the current turbulent period of transition to the knowledge economy, any serious and influential social and economic entity tries to comply the principles of its activity with the rules of conduct dictated by the new transformative economic reality. Accordingly, international organizations such as the United Nations, World Bank, International Monetary Fund, World Trade Organization, Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, as well as the regional international organizations, academic, economic and administrative sectors of national states, while planning their future development and their strategic goals, try to anticipate the basic principles and regularities of basic global economic transformation towards the economy of knowledge, i.e., they try to comply the principles of their activities with the rules of conduct dictated by the new transformative economic reality.

Each influential social and economic entity sees its interest in recognizing the accomplished steps in the transformation of knowledge economy on the global and local

level. Valorization of the progress, implementation of institutional preconditions necessary for effective adaptation of the subject to the conditions characteristic of the knowledge economy, as recommended by the World Bank Institute (WBI), is enabled by application of the Knowledge Assessment Methodology, as a fundamental economy resource (World Bank 2007), which specifies the Knowledge Economic Index. The Knowledge Assessment Methodology and the Knowledge Economic Index are orientated primarily towards identification of the results accomplished by the national states within their institutional administrative economic and socio-political transformation, in adjusting to the principles of functioning of the knowledge economy. The Knowledge Assessment Methodology and the Knowledge Economic Index enable analysis of structural indicators that show the degree of readiness of each country for efficient operation in the conditions of knowledge economy. This methodology distinguishes four main areas that are subject to structural analysis: education (literacy rate of citizens over 15 years of age, participation rate of citizens in secondary education, participation rate of citizens in higher education); innovation system (number of researchers in the department of research and development per million inhabitants, the number of patents registered by the United States Patent and Trademark Office - USPTO per million inhabitants, the number of scientific-research and professional papers per million inhabitants), information and communication technologies (number of telephone connections, fixed and mobile per thousand inhabitants), number of computers per one thousand inhabitants, the number of Internet users per thousand inhabitants) and the legal and economic framework (customs and non-tariff barriers, regulatory quality, functionality of the legal state, i.e., the rule of law).

The results obtained by this methodology in principle give a picture of the situation in which the states are, in terms of the willingness of their economies and institutions to function in the conditions of knowledge economy. So, according to the presented analysis of the World Bank in relation to the the Knowledge Economy Index (KEI), the states that show the best results have the best developed competitive performances in the conditions of knowledge economy. Top-ranked countries according to the Knowledge Economic Index for 2008 are (World Bank 2009): 1. Denmark (KEI: 9.58), 2. Sweden (KEI: 9.52), 3. Finland (KEI: 9.37) 4. Netherlands (KEI: 9.32), 5. Norway (KEI: 9.32). Macedonia is ranked at 63-rd place with KEI: 5.33. Countries in the European Union which have over 50 million inhabitants according to the Knowledge Economic Index for 2008 had the following results: 8-th place United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (KEI: 9.09), 14-th place Germany (KEI: 8.87), 20-th place France (KEI: 8.47), 27-th place Italy (KEI: 7.86). The three

Balkan countries associated to the European Union in 2007, i.e., 2013, have accomplished the following results: 39-th place Croatia (KEI: 7.19), 41-st place Bulgaria (KEI: 6.80), 43-th place Romania (KEI: 6.37). The results of the states which according to the terminology of the European Union belong to the Western Balkans are: 83-th place Albania (KEI: 4.04), and in that report is stated that for Bosnia and Herzegovina and the State Union of Serbia and Montenegro there are no official data. Top-ranked countries according to the Knowledge Economic Index for 2012 are (World Bank, 2013): 1. Sweden (KEI: 9.43), 2. Finland (KEI: 9.33), 3. Denmark (KEI: 9.16) 4. Netherlands (KEI: 9.11), 5. Norway (KEI: 9.11). Macedonia is ranked at 57-th place, with KEI: 5.65. Countries in the European Union that have over 50 million inhabitants according to the Knowledge Economic Index for 2012 had the following results: 8-th place Germany (KEI: 8.90), 14-th place United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (KEI: 8.76), 24-th place France (KEI: 8.21), 30-th place Italy (KEI: 7.89). The three Balkan countries associated to the European Union in 2007, i.e., 2013, accomplished the following results: 39-th place Croatia (KEI: 7.29), 44-th place Romania (KEI: 6.82), 45-th place Bulgaria (KEI: 6.80). The results of the states that according to the terminology of the European Union belong to the Western Balkans are: 49-th place Serbia (KEI: 6.02), 70-th Bosnia and Herzegovina (KEI: 5.12). From these results, it can be concluded that the best social institutional economic performance of adopting to the regulatory of the knowledge economy are Denmark, Sweden, Norway, Finland and Netherlands. Furthermore, a slight decline may be noted in the performance of these top-ranked countries which is probably due to the global economic crisis since the end of the first decade of the XXI century. Bulgaria, Romania and Croatia, as young members of the European Union, show some improvement in their performance, which is probably a result of their membership in the Union, i.e., the implementation of strict regulations imposed by the Union. At analyzing of the states with the most powerful European economies, it can be concluded that Germany and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland show very solid performances, whereupon in the period from 2008 to 2012, Germany enhances its performance and its competitiveness, while for the United Kingdom Great Britain and Northern Ireland can be noticed a certain decrease in performance and reduction of global competitiveness of the states, taking into account that Germany today is a nucleus of United Europe and the driving force of the extremely complex and multidimensional EU integration processes, so it can be concluded that European integrations strengthen the economic potentials and social capacities of Central Europe (Wiener and Diez 2009).

In order to strengthen its own potentials in adapting the institutional capacities to social demands of the knowledge economy, the European Union continuously conceives educational development policies that aim to facilitate modernization of European education in order to recognize and respect the standards of society. According to the opinion of the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC), European economic, social and educational policy should be aimed towards the promotion of Europe, i.e., the European Union as a driving force in the process of transition of the global society and the global economy towards a society, i.e., economy of knowledge. Accordingly, the European Union should create educational facilities for the education of professional staff that will be prepared to contribute in conceiving and realizing the transformation of European market of digital services (Official Journal of the European Union 2014). The functionality of digital society is a priority in designing the knowledge society. Hereupon, guided by basic humanistic, democratic, as well as European values, the European Union should pay special attention to the inclusion of all European citizens in the digital society. A functional digital society should not have a character of elitist exclusive community, i.e., it is not supposed to be an additional cause of exclusion of certain categories of citizens marginalized from the mainstream of European society. Accordingly, the European Union promotes stands by which the identification of universal humanistic values is a prerequisite for building a functional, stable and prosperous society of knowledge (Guisan 2011).

Digital society requires more flexibility in terms of continuous adjustment and improvement of social institutions. According to the opinion of the European Economic and Social Committee, European Union should encourage educational institutions to direct their capacities to strengthen the potentials of functional society of knowledge, to work continuously on development and strengthening of educational and scientific potentials, as well as to continuously work in favor of the development of knowledge, skills, abilities of citizens in relation to a wide range of topics, social, civic and cultural skills, ability to learn, creativity, innovation, willingness and ability for teamwork. Ministries of Education of the member states should provide appropriate professional upgrading of pedagogical staff in order to identify the priorities of modern education and modern society and to recognize the need for personal, continuous professional development (Official Journal of the European Union 2014). Modern era requires forming and developing of social mentality prepared to face continuous changes and improvements, so accordingly, basic objective of the educational system reforms of the member states of the European Union should not be directed solely to meet the specific needs of the labor market, but also that the European

education system should be conceptualized to enable formation of free, responsible individuals who will be active participants in social development.

A big task, but also an obligation of modern humanity, is inextricably linked to the development and promotion of education. In order to achieve this, it is necessary to have updated, in depth, dynamic conception of education and its development. It will take place within the contemporary philosophy of education, pedagogy and other scientific disciplines whose subject of research is education. In front of the philosophy of education stands a big task and responsibility to design a refinement and humanization of modern man, who, affected by the modern lifestyle, rapid and radical changes, the unstoppable transformation of social conditions caused by the rapid development of science and technology, might become separated from the fundamental human values and alienate from himself and his surroundings. The continued prosperity of mankind will be enabled only with the humanization of modern man, which will include the fundamental human values, and at the same time observe and anticipate modern trends in the development of science and technology as essential human and civilization benefits (Dewey 2008).

Knowledge, creativity and spirituality as propellants of economic-social political development of the knowledge society

In front of the modern philosophy and ethics of education stands an essential civilization obligation, imminent to overall philosophical synopsis, to conceive a plan and theoretically articulate the efforts of mankind for achieving self-knowledge, for clear and precise definition of its own goals, and for ethical and pedagogical directing of efforts to panhuman existence, creation, improvement and development. In this sense, the educational process can be seen as a process of transferring common timeless spiritual and humanistic values, recognized in certain cultural-historical value anticipated aspirations. "Timeless values, permeating in time and shaping the history in contact with the spiritual flows, along with their appearance, which is manifested through that contact, must form a definite, specific shapes, in which they will be the historic factors" (Vuk-Pavlović 1932: 72). Numerous personal cultural forms shape spirit of the community, thusly creating a common culture, which, expressed through certain objects and spiritual objectivities, can be labeled as "civilization." In this context, a person is one of the many free and humane individuals that

create community solely as a blend of active spirituality, oriented to the values and meaning. Education is one of the most important activities of creating a community of individuals.

The development of knowledge society has a major impact on the overall development of educated activity, as well as on redefining and determining the social role of education. Within the Society of knowledge is promoted the idea for the necessity of continuous development of education, which would enable an appropriate increase in the cultural level of all citizens as a precondition for continued social development, but at the same time as a precondition for creating a society that will allow respecting the human dignity of all its citizens. Society of knowledge emphasizes the importance of the independent use of human mind in shaping self-conscious critical worldview. Faith in education, in fact, is a faith in man, in his intellectual potential, but this belief is accompanied by the belief in man as a humane creature that is able and ready to determine his own goals and priorities. Accordingly, the human race has potential to independently develop its own culture and civilization, while the educators emphasize that only by realizing what the human capabilities are, in an ethical sense can be accepted one's own responsibility for individual self-realization and own happiness in individual frames, as well as for development of the society and human culture in general. If a man does not believe in his own potential and possibilities, there would be no ethical and rational basis to take the responsibility for his own life, as well as for the development of society and culture, but he would rather have to search all over again for the authorities that would determine his goals and objectives.

Only the educated man can properly recognize the human intellectual and spiritual capabilities, and human potential in general, since the main goal should be education for all people regardless of their class, ethnic, religious and sexual background (Freire 1996). Therefore, by way of enlightenment and through the popularization of education will be strengthened universal belief in man and in human capabilities, and thusly the dominance of absolute authorities will be surpassed, and building up a society based on humanistic principles will start, the principles of equality and solidarity between people.

Culture and civilization are a framework in which man exists as a biological, social, historical and spiritual being. Therefore, education is the cornerstone of the survival and development of human culture and civilization. If education does not exist, or if its function of transferring knowledge and skills to the young generations would not be accomplished, every person for himself and each new human generation would have to re-found the foundations of human life and culture. Today's civilization is a result of continuous development of mankind through thousands of years. Bearing this in mind, it is clear that one

man for himself and one generation could not set by themselves foundations on any civilized human and social life.

The basic role of education in terms of its function of humanization of man (Kant, 2012) refers to the transfer of basic human values from generation to generation. Without their introduction, understanding, acceptance and implementation, he would be a being without self-knowledge and dignity, without goals and well-directed life pathway, no desire for learning about the world and the meaning of existence. It is the well-grounded attitude of education that allows individual humanization of every human being to take place through the educational process. Apparent form of the educational process is a well conceived and appropriate educational activity through which to each individual human being is transferred, i.e., advanced a human identity which at the same time is generic for all people, but it is realized in a specific and unique shape for each person individually, which allows building up the foundations of the human personality.

The education also enables preservation, transfer and development of common human values, continuously, from generation to generation, thusly humanizing every human being and transmitting and developing human culture and civilization based on common humane principles of humanity.

In order to determine the main goals, objectives and role of education, it is necessary to critically examine and reconceive the fundamental values of contemporary culture and civilization (Hutchins 1953). Without proper conception and definition of basic cultural and civilizational values, a coherent and consistent theory of education cannot be devised. Education is one of the fundamental human, and at the same time, social activities. Through education are transferred civilization benefits and cultural values from generation to generation. The aim of the educational process is the formation of self-conscious and responsible persons who are trained and ready to actively participate in a society and to contribute to the development of social relations and social reality, and also to promote the fundamental cultural and humanistic values which the society is based upon (Adler 1998). Therefore, it is necessary above all to conceive, to understand and to define the role, rights and obligations of the individual in a society, its role as a propellant of social changes and social development, basic principles for proper foundation and structure of the state, in order to respond to the authentic and real needs of citizens, to ensure their safety and to allow unfettered development, personal and professional advancement, dignified life and well-being of all community members.

Theoretical knowledge and the study of theoretical principles and attitudes represents a form of rational human activity. The theory is directly conditioned and permeated by the need for human practical actions aimed at achieving its objectives and interests. Accordingly, the theoretical knowledge that students encounter in the teaching, is directly dependent on the need for practical application of knowledge and skills acquired in the educational process. However, theoretical knowledge always depends on the real social conditions, primarily social relationships, their foundations and special interests that arise from them.

For a thorough transformation and continuous development of society, it is necessary to make a well-conceived and expedient, wide social action. Therefore, the educational activity has a fundamental social role and responsibility in determining the principles and understanding the fundamental assumptions for transformation of social relations, which would enable smooth, continuous development of society as a whole, its humanization and adapting to the real needs and interests of citizens.

Thorough transformation of society and the essential redefinition and reaffirmation of the fundamental social values can only be achieved through the process of education (Hutchins 1947). Education is not limited only to the organized, institutionalized teaching where children and youth are included, but also education, in the broadest sense, is a fundamental humanistic, educational, unifying, social activity that connects and brings together people with different racial, gender and confessional provenance in panhuman unity founded on the highest humanistic, cultural and civilizational values. Only education can allow a person to perceive and develop his potentials and abilities and to affect the material and social conditions that surround him.

The place and role of humanitarian principles in the process of building up the postindustrial society of knowledge

As part of the educational process based on the humanitarian principles, the encouragement and development of critical awareness has a particular importance. Critical thoughts should be directed to the conceiving of individual's existence, social conditions and social relations, and at the same time to the historical genesis of development of the society and social structure, which are based on social practices and social norms.

Educational activity is permeated by social practice and contains contradictions and antagonisms that burden and erode the society. Social antagonisms and contradictions are

based on the reality of social relations. Social relations represent a complex mix of interests and needs of individuals, interest groups and institutions that make up society. It is quite real and understandable that this can result in incongruity and opposing of the interests of certain interest groups and institutions. Social antagonism is a real consequence of conflicting interests between people, between social groups and institutions that actively participate in social life. Social antagonisms and contradictions are numerous, deeply rooted in social life and multilayered. They are directly reflected in educational theory and educational practice and represent the integral, coherent part of society and social life. Education cannot be neutral in excluding of external influences. It always, either directly or indirectly, or less transparently, takes sides in terms of social turmoils. Responsibility of the philosophy of education, as a humanistic discipline, is to shape the concept and to find ways of rising above the daily present turmoil and social antagonisms, and to focus on conceiving social development based on objectively and rationally grounded surpassing of social problems. It is not possible to do that without enabling and encouraging critical thought about the possibilities and ways of resolving the deeply rooted realistic conflicting interests of certain social groups, institutions and individuals, and about the consequences arising out of these contradictions, as well as for the degradation of society and the devaluation of social relations that directly and indirectly affect and jeopardize the interests of all relevant factors.

The main task of education is humanizing of man by overcoming prejudices and showing the real demagogic nature of authorities that incite alienation and dehumanization of man, degradation of human values and devaluation of the society. By way of humanized education, people are supposed to perceive the necessity of social changes leading to the humanization of society and humanization of social relations, but also to face the necessity of losing i.e., waiver of certain social privileges, which by giving temporal welfare and social power to the minority, restrict freedom and social security of most members of the society. Social power in a society based on humanistic values should be conveyed to all members of society, and hereupon, human dignity, individual rights and interests of all citizens should be respected, allowing unfettered development of society as a guarantor of personal freedom and well-being of all community members.

Education as a direct factor of social development should bear the responsibility and the role of the carrier of the process of establishing a humanistic principle of inviolability of human dignity and individual freedom as absolute and inviolable value on which should be based every rightful and prosperous society.

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