SOCIAL, TECHNOLOGICAL AND ECONOMIC REQUIREMENTS OF QUALITY ASSURANCE IN THE EDUCATION, IN THE NEXT DECADE

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Abstract

This study helps to establish the educational strategy of Middle-East-European universities during the process of enlargement of EU, by clarifying the common European values and heritage of the old world, announcing the historical opportunity of a united Europe on the basis of *shared ideals and common rules*, highly appreciating the free circulation of goods, services, capital and people on the basis of Essential requirements.

Keywords: quality-assurance, EU legal system, education.

Preambulum

'Rarely in the course of history does an opportunity like this present itself. For the first time since the fall of the Roman Empire we have the opportunity to unite Europe, and this time it will not be by force of arms but on the basis of *shared ideals and agreed common rules'*.
Mr. Romano Prodi's speech: On enlargement [1].

The Maastricht Treaty provides the guideline for Middle-East-European countries to make adequate actions to EU accession: 'The Community shall contribute to the development of quality-education … *fully respecting the responsibility of the Member States* for the content of teaching and the organisation of education system and their cultural and linguistic diversity.

…excluding any harmonisation of the laws and regulations of the Member States' [2].

1. Pecularities of Europe and World Tendencies

The peculiarities of Europe should be respected meanwhile world tendencies should be transferred into European dimension. Diversity of national situations and the inadequacy of global solutions are admitted by EU.

1.1. 'Four freedoms' as Shared European Ideals

Historical opportunity of a 500-million-people, open, frontier free EU economic area, where **capital, goods, services and people called the Four Freedoms**, can circulate freely, in accordance with the Treaties of Rome.

1.2. Diversity of National Cultures

Europe has a unique cultural and linguistic wealth and diversity. Having a common geographical, historical and cultural heritage, with all its advantages and disadvantages, Europe has newer been a 'melting pot' like America. The Community is declared to be ready to take the risk and enjoy the benefits of its diversity.

1.3. Internalisation of Trade and Economy with Dissemination of New Technologies

'EU and non-EU manufacturers will only need to comply with EU norms to be allowed to sell their products and services in EU (with CE marking)' [3]. But global cultural and technological tendencies should be transferred into European culture, in order to attenuate their harmful effects and to avoid the risk of cultural uniformity.

1.4. Paradigm of Safety

(diversity of cultures + freedom in circulation of goods) in EU area.

(diversity + different economic development) + (free movement of goods) = RISK
It is an important concern for the future: to maintain long term ability to preserve a high level of security and safety inside the Union. Just the respect of 'essential requirements' (health, safety, environmental and customer interest) can be a guarantee of integration under the conditions of free and low-risk circulation of goods in common EU area. The consequent use of accreditation, verification, conformity assessment and mutual acceptance – on the basis of directives and harmonised norms – is the best way to safeguard our common European values.

1.5. Subsidiarity

Subsidiarity means that the European Union should only take action when this action can be more effectively carried out at a European level or when the Member States themselves cannot address the issue effectively [6].

1.6. Unemployment and Social Exclusion

Unemployment levels in EU are higher than in other parts of the world (Japan or US). Information Technology has led to the disappearence of routine and repetitive work, contributing temporarily to unemployment – and as a consequence of it – to increased social exclusion, effecting mainly the young generations.

1.7. Protection of our Common European Environment

It is a hard challenge for candidate countries to

- protect, preserve and improve the quality of common European environment,
- do a prudent and rational utilisation of finite natural resources,
- introduce Tradeable permits and Tradeable Emission Credits via Voluntary agreements,
- not to distort the competition by low-cost-production, on the price of environmental pollution.

1.8. Information Society

The quasiinstantaneous access to information highway brings to contact academics, students and researchers, changing a lot the nature of work. At the same time information technology is contributing to the disappearance of routine and repetitive work, because both can be programmed and automated [3].

1.9. Mass Production contra 'Customer Satisfaction'

Mass production is declining, making room for a more customer-oriented type of production, in the name of TQM-philosophy: Customer satisfaction. On the other hand we are witness of a high fragmentation of the market due to cultural diversity as well.

1.10. Growing Anxieties and Increasing Distrust

Anxiety is a significant feeling of the end of our century. It has some parallels in the transition from the Middle Ages to the Renaissance. Scientific ventures and technological progress appear as a threat [6]. Media is just reinforcing anxieties, and this is a media-dominated era [3]. We experience an increasing distrust in technical experts due to

- for public ununderstandable revolutionary development of technologies,

- which technologies sometimes are really dangerous (gene technology),
- immoral/inethical use of technological achievements in the past (Hiroshima),
- ignoring social partners' right for involvment, openness and welfare of the society,
- Organizations are no longer arranged in accordance with a technical logic but are based on the needs and goals of the human beings. People wish to be acknowledged and to participate in the realisation of organisations' policy and strategy. They wish to be given opportunities for growth and individual development, to have a career. They expect from the company not only safety, but also health and *welfare*.

1.11. Transition Countries' Specialities: Loss of Bearings and Cultural Heritage

Authoritarian regimes undermined and falsified the history. The price what Middle-East-European countries need to pay for it, is the partial loss of common European values and norms. These countries survive a deep moral crisis in social partnership [3].

2. Values which Should be Protected by Quality Assurance

Remember and keep in mind:

The community is fully respecting the responsibility of the Member States for the content of teaching and the organisation of educational system [2].
Human capital is the most important resource of each society. It should be considered as a long-term investment [2].

By Jacques Delors: ' ...education and training is one of the conditions for the development of a new model of more employment-intensive growth' [3].

Due to globalization and our accession to Europe: it will radically change the nature of the work. In order to adopt and internalise the shared European ideals and common rules, our government and educational system should

1. Accept the increased desire for greater transparency of its system, in order to make controllable the cost effectiveness of public expenditures in the field of education.
2. Make understand society that the investment in knowledge plays an essential role in employment, competitiveness and social cohesion of the Union. Manpower, regarded as renewable resource, contributes to employment-intensive growth, which does seem to be a 'panacea' for many problems of European societies. Education should be considered a long-term investment, and not as a cost increasing factor! Money spent on education is really the best long-term investment for each society.

3. One of the guidelines for our university – in tercier education of Technology – can be the deployment of R. Prodi's 'agreed common rules' [1], which are formulated as the essential requirements in harmonized European directives and norms: health, safety, environmental and customer interest. Essential requirements should be the smallest common denominator of EU area.

4. Due to information technology work content will increasingly be made up of intelligent tasks requiring initiatives, synthesis and ability to adopt. In harmony with EU principle of subsidiarity organizations survive a management decentralization, so each intellectual worker of the new generation should acquire basic management techniques and skills beside its professional knowledge.

5. Students at the university need to learn how to handle high level of stress. At working places they will be empowered with an increased individual autonomy, but accompanied with much less clear perception of the consequences of their actions, and decisions, due to the turbulent and ever changing economic surrounding.

6. In spite of growing anxieties industry relies increasingly on science in development of new products. Both, technology management and PR activity (to make public accept new technologies) are important disciplines for the new generation. Students should have a special and near relation to intelligent machines and software products.

7. Experts of the New Century Should be Familier with EU Legal System:

Directives	Harmonized norms	Technical legislation
Liability of manufacturers	Accreditation	Quality assurance
Product liability	Assurance of compliance	Certification of conformity
Conformity assessment	Market surveillance	Consumer protection …

adequate to the safety and security concerns of the 21-st century's Europe.

8. Our universities should solve the problems of

- certification process, validation and recognition of skills acquired,
- longer studies and increased number of students yet maintain the quality,
- change of teaching methods: by replacing passive teacher-pupil relationship with new interactive methods (IT),
- preparing students for team work in flexible learning organisations, accepting the ideals of lifelong education and adaptation to industrial changes through vocational trainings and retrainings. Helping the integration and reintegration into the labour market, enhancing employability and personal fulfilment,
- developing their own potential to become a complete human being, with building up character and broadening outlook with cross-disciplinary creativeness, accepting one's responsibility in society.

Paradoxically: both, emerging demand of extreme specialisation and broad knowledge base are welcome with cross-disciplinary creativeness (this complex goal can be achieved just with longer education).

3. Community Actions
shall be Aimed at

1. Developing the European dimension in education, by dissemination of common European values and heritage.
2. Encouraging the reciprocal academic recognition of diplomas and periods of study.
3. Encouraging mobilities of students and teachers, youth exchanges.
4. Exchange of information and experiences on issues, common to the education system.
5. Quality-monitoring instruments for measuring general performance and quality.
6. Facilitate adaptation to industrial changes, through vocational trainings and retrainings.
7. Improve initial and continuing vocational training in order to facilitate vocational integration and reintegration into the labour market.
8. Equality in education and training.

References

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