

THE TRADITIONAL UNIVERSITY MODEL IN THE FACE OF NEW GLOBAL CHALLENGES

MODELUL UNIVERSITAR TRADIȚIONAL ÎN FAȚA NOILOR PROVOCĂRI GLOBALE

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Elena MANDAJI,

Universitatea de Stat „B. P. Hasdeu” din Cahul

emandaji@yahoo.com

ORCID ID: 0000-0003-0924-4602

Rezumat: Dezvoltarea societății informaționale și diseminarea pe scară largă a tehnologiilor informaționale, deschid noi oportunități de învățare și provoacă opiniile și practicile consacrate despre modul în care ar trebui organizată și desfășurată predarea și învățarea. În articol va fi analizate contradicțiile restante în activitățile sistemului universitar tradițional. Dar, după ce am analizat totalitatea provocărilor globale pentru o universitate clasică din partea realităților sociale moderne, se poate observa că răspunsul la aceste provocări este formarea unor universități istorice de „nouă generație”, care combină funcțiile tradiționale cu noi misiuni.

În acest articol, vom încerca să analizăm o serie de provocări, precum: globalizarea, îmbătrânirea societății; concurența tot mai mare dintre instituțiile de învățământ superior, atât naționale, cât și internaționale, și dezvoltarea tehnologică rapidă, din cauza căreia universitățile tradiționale trebuie transformate pentru a accepta noi realități. Dar pentru a realiza această transformare, universitățile vor trebui să implementeze strategii și politici, care implementează cadre academice flexibile, abordări pedagogice inovatoare, noi forme de evaluare și colaborare instituțională.

Cuvinte cheie: inovație, universitate, globalizare, generație, învățământ superior, transformare.

Abstract: The development of the information society and the widespread of information technologies open new opportunities for learning and challenge established views and practices about how teaching and learning should be organized and conducted. The article will analyze the outstanding contradictions in the activities of the traditional university system. But after analyzing the totality of the global challenges for a classical university from the modern social realities, the answer to these challenges is the formation of historic "new generation" universities that combine traditional functions with new missions.

This paper will try to analyze a series of challenges, such as globalization, the aging society; the increasing competition between higher education institutions, both national and international, and rapid technological development, due to which traditional universities must be transformed to accept new realities. But, in order to

achieve this transformation, universities will need to implement strategies and policies that implement flexible academics, innovative pedagogical approaches, new forms of assessment, and institutional collaboration.

Keywords: *innovation, university, globalization, generation, higher education, transformation.*

Introduction

By many indications, a real revolution is brewing in higher education. It seems that universities will soon lose their positions, if they do not actively “die out”, at least. Moreover, for the Republic of Moldova, the situation is aggravated by the presence of negative internal and global trends, which, overlapping each other, and could generate a destructive effect of enormous force. There are many reasons for this, and in order to understand what is happening with the university system today, it is necessary to analyze the latest trends in the university environment against the backdrop of historical traditions. To do this, we will carry out three consecutive steps. The first one is to identify the urgent contradictions in the activities of universities, the second one is to fix the emerging solutions to the accumulated problems, the third one is to make the simplest extrapolation of emerging trends and evaluate the picture of a possible future. This approach will make it possible to give the most voluminous and objective description of the dynamics of the university sector.

Research methodology

In the process of writing this work, various types of methods and rules were used in order to obtain and achieve a more detailed analysis, such as: the historical method, the empirical method, the structural method, the institutional method, etc. All these methods made it possible to demonstrate the evolutionary appearance of the universities and reforms of higher education in general; to analyze the functioning of the mechanisms of official documents, statistical data, reports; to investigate the problem in activities between state bodies and higher educational institutions, etc.

Findings

Throughout history, universities have changed their role and act in constant adaptation to various contexts of society, but not without certain conflicts and resistance. New problems that appear in a global society lead to a rethinking of new missions for universities and their connections with the rest of society. To

cope with new problems, the university must be the space of thinking, reflection and actions, participate in local and global problems open to the public and cooperation with other universities on a global scale (Lobera & Escrigas, 2010).

As the renowned researcher Altbach (2010) observed, the strategic role of higher education is to seek solutions to the challenges and opportunities inherent in globalization (health, energy, food safety and intercultural dialogue) and the appearance of truly global universities, which do not intend only to compete worldwide in the resource scholarship (teachers, researchers, students, infrastructure) is only a response to the aggression of emerging economies that have generated asymmetrical interdependencies in the metamorphosis of academic paradigms. In the same order of ideas, Mayor-Zaragoza (2010) finds that adaptation to financial, commercial, services and ideas beyond national borders, led to an exponential mass (especially after 1960) grafted on the hallucinating evolution of information technology and of the new media.

Today, regardless of the paradigms adopted (research, business, anreperorial, open university, etc.) universities are called to fulfill more but with less resources, considers Marginson (2007). He continues and states that, although they often come into conflict with society regarding the mission and roles, universities are aimed at direct, internal, long-term links for the economy, as well as for the practical needs of society and the cost and remuneration are offered to study in academic institutional based on productivity in research. In accordance with this, specialists believe that universities, which have become research and training, provide necessary skills for the growing number of new professions that require complex knowledge and skills but in the equal opportunity manner (through scholarships, loan programs, etc.) (Gidley et al. 2010, Svenson et Wilhborg, 2010).

The externalization of benefits through the internalization of costs have redesigned the functions of university education and although, sometimes higher education is perceived as a commodity that must be traded, it must be emphasized that the international academic landscape, in the society of the 21st century, is propelled and revolves around the paradigms of internationalization, europeanization and globalization (Deem, 2008).

The recognition of qualifications, quality assurance, the relationship between applied research and basic research through partnerships with large consortia, the cross-border movement of students and study programs, the use of the English language for scientific communication, multiculturalism and

homogenization, recompose the mosaic of the university's vocation in the post-industrial era of the information age and globalization.

These changes have often led to conflicts between the new realities and values of a university, with some specialists considering that there is an increased danger of conflict of interests between the exercise of the traditional mission of universities and its "commercialization". The managerial compartmentalization of universities by adapting to the new challenges but especially to the multi-beneficial explosion of the ICT sector, by eliminating the need for spatial-temporal proximity, led to functional over-specializations in which glocalization and regionalization compete with internationalization (Peters, 2007).

What is the new role of the university in the context of globalization? This is the question to which dozens of specialists are looking for answers, but generally it can be stated that the university reaches its mission if it prefers self-programming, in the medium-term and long-term adaptation to contexts; if it uses autonomy and academic freedom as an innovative instrument; if it advocates for the rationalization of a vain system, instead of adapting to it; if it prefers a certain profile (research, teaching, services, business, etc.), the non-performing mix; if it balances in the curriculum: transmission of knowledge and innovation, training and information, knowledge and application, sciences and visions; if it adopts an open and participatory governance and a focused management on the results; if it provides an open and critical climate, that can motivate teaching staff and students.

Traditional university in the face of global challenges. The rapidly changing realities of the modern world constitute a set of historically unprecedented global challenges to the new European system of higher education and its core - the classical / traditional university.

The first challenge that could be named - is *an innovative type of social development*, focused on the continuous introduction of innovations that ensure the production of high-tech products in demand by the market, the growth of its quality and giving priority to practice-oriented situational knowledge ("here and now"), as opposed to abstract fundamental knowledge ("everywhere and always"). The reverse side of continuous innovative changes is the risks of social development - the constant production by society of environmental, technological, economic, socio-political, institutional risks. Under these conditions of unpredictability, randomness, uncertainty, the traditional university methods and forms of knowledge transmission lose their effectiveness, are

discredited by the “fluid modernity”.

Another challenge is *economic centrism* as the basis of social relations. It is aimed at the total commodity-money nature of the exchange of products of activity, payment for all goods and services. The modern form of its expression is the “knowledge economy”, that is, when the production, sale, and dissemination of knowledge become the main factor in the reproduction of social wealth. Knowledge begins to play a key role in creating competitive advantages and generating economic value, and also acts as capital to be reproduced in economic cycles. Education is seen as one of the forms of functioning of capital, but spending on education is regarded as an investment in human capital. The university, being involved in economic-centric trends, is transforming from a classical social institution into an economic entity engaged in the production of scientific and educational services. The markers of this transformation are the commercial nature of education, the use of economic performance criteria. Such a transformation is unusual and painful for a traditional university, which has traditionally assessed the effectiveness of its activities in terms of public good, disinterested service to society.

The third challenge is the *denationalization of social institutions*. Characteristic for a market organized democratic society, this process significantly changes the place and role of the state in the system of higher education, where it, especially in Moldova, for a long time retained the functions of almost the only customer, investor and executor of educational activities; encourages the state to reconsider the nature of relations with the university. Going further, the more inefficiency of total public administration and centralized resource support of higher education institutions is revealed: the doom of state universities to funding on a residual basis, the growing inability of the state to update and effectively maintain the educational and laboratory base of education in the face of innovative changes, to provide material and financial resources for the development of university science. The denationalization of higher education is becoming a leading trend. The prospects for state participation in the activities of higher education institutions are associated with public-private partnerships, the creation of conditions for the inflow of private money into higher education, and the expansion of the field of activity of market institutions.

The fourth challenge - *the informatization of society and the virtualization of public communications* - as a powerful social trend means the transition of numerous social communications from the real, material-sensual area to the

virtual, non-material area. Virtualization translates social interaction into an interactive network mode, expanding the quantitative composition of its participants and freeing them from territorial attachment. Cognitive relations in the field of education are subject to the process of virtualization to the greatest extent. The increasing use of modern information technologies and Internet capabilities in the university provides an unprecedented speed of access to cognitive resources, their translation and processing. This trend has given rise to the phenomena of territorially delocalized open distance education. The traditional university, being territorially localized in its national regions, is unlikely to be able to compete with open education institutions.

The next challenge that can be named is *consumerism*, as the dominant type of modern social life arrangement. The consumption of education reduces the completeness of the relationship between the university and students. It can be noted that focusing on the “effortless” way of thinking and acting of students, it causes unjustified simplification and facilitation of the content of curricula; imposes educational products - surrogates of dubious quality in order to minimize efforts to master them; encourages the entertaining and gaming start of educational activities; entails the loss by education of a character that is super-holistic for the individual, reducing it to the value of ordinary consumer goods and services. All of the above enter into a colossal contradiction with the values of academism, which were persistently cultivated and multiplied by the traditional university (Balathchii, 2015).

Finally, the last and main challenge faced by the educational systems of any country is *globalization*. An integral part of this process is the free movement of intellectual resources - information, scientific ideas, technologies, qualified personnel. The integration of educational institutions, the creation of international educational programs and networks reflect the trend towards the formation of a single, international educational space. The transition to the information society creates a new environment and new rules of behavior, including attitudes towards education and the choice of a profession. This primarily affects the younger generation. Focusing on the requirements of employers, it, in turn, makes other requests for the content and quality of the educational services offered.

The world market of educational services cannot ignore the needs of the younger generation. The educational systems of developed countries are gradually becoming accessible to Moldovan youth thanks to liberal migration

legislation. Moreover, they actively began to enter the internal Moldovan market, creating a serious competitive environment for Moldovan universities. And our response to this challenge will be the creation of an internationally competitive educational system.

In the conditions of the long-term crisis of the Moldovan educational system, international integration is not only possible, but also necessary precisely to overcome our problems. The first steps towards this have already been taken, and evidence of this is our participation in the Bologna process, aimed at creating a common European Higher Education Area with the aim of increasing the mobility of citizens in the labor market and strengthening the competitiveness of European higher education (Chitiba, 2012).

Another challenge is those new legal and economic relations between the state and the educational sphere, which are being built in Moldova in recent decades. However, the situation is not purely Moldovan. The global trend is manifested in the policy pursued by many countries of deregulation of the university system, granting it greater powers and autonomy. At the same time, there is a decrease in the share of government spending in meeting the needs of higher education institutions. This is a characteristic feature of the last decades for the absolute majority of the developed countries of the world, and especially for countries with economies in transition. In virtually all developed countries, investment in university infrastructure has fallen below the level, needed to maintain sustainability. This is caused, in particular, by the transition to mass higher education and the fact that governments, seeing the demand of the population and employers for higher education, are trying to shift part of the costs onto their shoulders. This is also affected by the fact that, in the context of an aging population, the state is forced to allocate an increasing share of public spending to the needs of older generations - health care, social security, etc. (Lazarev, 2017).

The new requirements of society, the state, the labor market entail a change in the content and philosophy of education. This is also reflected in the position of the leadership of the educational sector. If earlier the educational sphere was based on meeting the needs of an industrial society, today we are meeting totally different needs, the basis of which is the knowledge economy. Science and technology are developing at such a pace today that the need for new knowledge is only increasing. The competitive economy that we want to build requires professionals, who are ready for the fact that they will regularly have to not only

improve their skills, but also change them. The quality of graduate training lies not only in the ability to analyze and solve problems, but also in the ability to improve the technologies of their own activities. The modern paradigm of education consists in the transition from “knowledge-based” education to an active, student-oriented one, it involves providing the graduate not so much with the amount of knowledge, but with a set of competencies that allow the student to quickly adapt in dynamically changing socio-economic conditions and apply the knowledge, while creating new competitive products.

The age of continuously updated technologies makes the idea of education throughout life especially relevant. Everyone understood this perspective. Meanwhile, time sets completely new tasks for modern universities, while opening up new opportunities. This, in turn, promotes the development of new types of educational services, expands the range of additional education services. Universities need to adapt to the needs for vocational training of various categories of the population: working students; students of mature age; students, who are studying at home; students, who are studying part-time; students of distance learning; there is a growing demand for training programs with the study of individual disciplines at different universities, etc. The development of the system of continuing professional education creates mechanisms for the inclusion of employers in the development of educational policy, quality standards for professional education, and allows for a more complete consideration of the rapidly changing needs of the labor market.

The development of information and communication technologies inevitably led to revolutionary changes in all aspects of the activities of universities, to which the university community should give an adequate response. Effective university management today has become possible only on the basis of automating key processes and creating a unified information environment that meets the strategic objectives of the university, as well as developing the concept of the university's information infrastructure that permeates all the activities of the university, including educational, research and organizational and management areas. Distance technologies are increasingly used in the organization of the educational process, the phenomenon of success of which lies in the ability to simultaneously satisfy the interests of both the university and students. The capabilities of universities that provide online educational services are no longer limited to space and seating, and students who combine study with work largely eliminate the need for classroom studies.

Therefore, every year colleges and universities of all countries expand the number of their students, who are studying, using distance technologies by tens and hundreds of times.

Conclusions

The most important challenge refers to the extension of the cooperation for the development of the quality, learning and research assessment systems. It could be find out, unfortunately, we find that all developing countries are facing benefits and cost internalization due to the exodus of gray matter. It could be said that the increasingly accentuated gap between the wealthy and the poor turns into a gap between the educated and the uneducated. It is absolutely necessary to reconsider the conditions of the transition from "brain drain" to "brain circulation" (Halagescu, 2011) for which the governments of the states are responsible to encourage and motivate through concrete measures to return to the country of origin those who gain the professional experience of the developed countries.

New requirements of the labor market and high competition force universities to build concepts for their development, analyze competitive advantages and determine the strategy that will ensure sustainable, harmonious development. This is possible only if there is a strict balance between the development plans of the university and the resources available to it. Thus, higher education institutions are faced with the need to move to strategic planning and strategic management of their activities. Today, it is necessary to introduce such management methods that increase the adaptive capabilities of the university to rapidly changing environmental conditions. Let me emphasize that the external environment is not just changing rapidly, it is practically unpredictable, whether it is about economic or legal aspects. It is impossible to develop while remaining an immobile academic structure that does not respond to the changing world. Only that university will be viable, if its life philosophy will be based on the desire for change.

It is important to note that economic and socio-political changes in society inevitably require a different educational system. New challenges give rise to the search for adequate answers to them.

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