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The Evolution of European Higher Education

Education

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ABSTRACT

The concept of quality often involves the idea of excellence, word that characterizes higher education. The XXth century registred changes that mark the universities today, taking into account: the positivation of knowledge, the undermining of autonomy anf the ideological instrumentation of the university, the unprecedented expansion of experimental science, the globalisation of hnowledge. These changes brought with them an equal number of challenges, overall for the universities.

Introduction

In a competitive context, excellence should be measured, both through scientific publications and their impact, and the learning outcomes and student success.

In the European Higher Education Area, international cooperation for quality academic education is organized on a European Register of National Quality Agencies and the European Network for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA).

Quality education will include teaching skills needed by entrepreneurs, and quality of learning will be linked to the documentation of the achievements of graduates of a university.

Thus, The Higher Education Funding Council for England uses four packages of indicators:

- access and participation of students;
- retention and progression in learning;
- research;
- employability of graduates.

Contemporary issues in higher education:

During the war, higher education has been a reliable partner to control technology, whether it was coming from industry or from the civil defense and thus imposed the concept of triple spiral as a model of development.

University, government and industry are components of the triple spiral.

The member countries of the Warsaw Pact, the government wanted more direct control over the research, which has structured it in a system of institutions, some of them subordinated National Academies of Sciences (ARACIS, 2010).

Technological development of contemporary societies raises a number of problems that limit growth in some directions.

The concept of sustainable development, formulated by the United Nations, exerted an increasing influence, since 1983 until now, on the world community policies.

Funding research directions that are given are a concern for future human to achieve millennium goals, and in Europe, to achieve the Lisbon project. The new version of the Lisbon objectives, universities play an important role in creating more new technology concepts.

In conclusion, technological innovation is considered the main engine of economic growth in today's global economy, particularly for higher education.

Raising living standards in developed countries has led to changes in attitude towards higher education.

Free access to higher education for any holder of high school degree has become a general rule.

France, in 1985, has imposed to bring the high school diploma for 80% of young people, but today it is unrealized goal.

The UK objective in 2011 was that half of young people under 30 to be enrolled or have graduated from university.

In Germany, in 2003 - 2004, only 23% of students coming out of secondary education, giving them the right to enroll at university.

Today, the only European country which derogate, in an indirect way this time, is Switzerland; only 20% of high school students can get the title, so enjoy free access to university.

In France, between 1960 to 1961 were 309,700 students enrolled, and later, between 2009 to 2010, their number increased to 2,316,103.

In Germany, the number of students tripled between 1960 and 2010. In Great Britain, the decade between 1983-1984 and 1993-1994, the share of students enrolled full time increased by 67%.

These events have affected the different continents and regions. The number of students increased rapidly in the Industrial West, followed by Eastern Europe, Latin America and Asia.

In the UK, UCAS (Universities College Admissions Service) processes the applications for inclusion, in a uniform manner, for all candidates for all 300 universities, including Oxford and Cambridge.

In Europe, the private institutions of higher education were rare before 1990. But in time, thanks to private universities, the offer higher education in Eastern Europe has exceeded demand.

We think that the document The Future of Higher Education – White Papers (2006), adopted by the United Kingdom, establishes for the universities the next 5 reference points:

- The university must be capable to extend and to assure the education that people need in certain moments;
- the university has to appeal more young people from families with reduced income;
- the university has to be capable to invest in the scientific research;
- the university has to be capable of offering the best facilities to the staff and to the students;

Universities are primarily responsible for the inclusion of education among the services, the agreements signed under the auspices of the International Labour Organization, which promotes the idea of free trade and free movement of goods, persons and services.

It is considered that the current educational model is oriented manufacturer and wants to change this:

- to be centered by student,
- to be market-driven through a competitive management;
- to be focused through a social responsibility (ARACIS, 2011).

There is a strong desire for widening access to higher education for disadvantaged groups, minorities and people with physical disabilities. It should be an important criterion for evaluation of universities. The access to online resources is considered in this regard, useful tools.

The role of universities is a democratic one, because it encourages upright mobility, social ascent that youth, regardless of origin group.

Universities today serve a goal of internationalization in the global community service, essential to democracy, acting directly on behalf of the students.

Internationalized universities contribute to labor mobility and indirectly supported the fight against abuses of the authorities, poor governance and discrimination of any kind.

Conclusions

The impact of three factors - technology, values and democratic self - led to a significant polarization of universities.

Experimental and natural science faculties are required to follow the rapid changes, to guide and provide public functions, to build competencies for new features of knowledge society.

The general trend is to reconstruct the polarity between science and conscience, which once stirred the spirits of the nineteenth century.

The university has grown very much in the second half of the XX$^{th\ century}$ and continues to grow.

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