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Tendencies of higher professional education development in the information society: ukrainian context

1. Information society: challenges and possibilities for education

Information society is an indispensable and natural product of the post-industrial society formation. According to D. Bell, the main feature of the post-industrial society is that the information (its obtaining, processing, transmission, spreading, management of data flows) becomes the main object of human activity [Bell 1973]. At the same time the information society results from the globalization of the production system, spread and use of the information [Giddens 2001]. It means that the information society is established on the global scale and becomes the global community only on the ground of globalization processes.

The majority of scientists consider that the main features of the information society are information, knowledge, communications, new technologies. However, in our opinion, the most important element of the information society, its system-forming factor and the mechanism providing the transformation of the information into knowledge is education and self-education. Thus, we can say that the information society itself is created by education among other factors, because education supports the way of obtaining, processing and spreading information in the society. Consequently, only a person that is prepared to obtaining information and new knowledge has all the chances for the career development and advantages from the life rivalry.

The educational system as an extensive network of general and specialized secondary and higher educational establishments is the basis for the formation and development of the information society because this system educates a person that has a wide range of general knowledge about the surrounding natural environment and society and reveals citizenly attitude to them.

At the same time, the transition to the information society has exposed the inability of the modern educational system to meet new demands of the social

development. The global educational crisis is a manifestation of the crisis of the whole industrial civilization [Coombs 1968].

The transition to the information society has activated the process of knowledge inflation. At the beginning of the XX century, the rate of duplication of the world information was one hundred years. Today, it already equals to five and in some fields – to two and a half years. The invention of the Internet has brought about even more drastic difference. According to the prognoses, by 2020–30-s the inflation of knowledge will make up from half a year to one year.

That is why the information society brings the scientists of the whole world to search not only new forms and methods of instruction but also a new model of the educational system. In addition, it is necessary to bear in mind that, firstly, the information society, in fact, ruptures the universalism and encyclopedism of education on all the levels, because the volume of acquired knowledge today is so huge that learning it by each separate person becomes impossible. Secondly, the information society contributes to the emergence of a great number of different schools with various levels and courses of instruction, which leads to a certain diversification of education. Though, with respect to the number of people acquiring it, the education remains massive, it stops being homotypic in the sense of level and quality of knowledge as well as its content even within training of graduates in the same specialty.

In the course of the information society development in Ukraine, several foundational vectors can be singled out which determine the priority changes in education: integration into the global and European common educational area; institutional changes, innovative development, preservation and development of the intellectual potential, strategic planning. Of special importance is the enactment of the Law of Ukraine „About the main principles of the information society development in Ukraine for 2007–2015” [Law 2007]. This normative act, in our opinion, may be the basis for practical actions aimed at the development of the information society as it represents the integral understanding of the problems, aims and tasks as well as up-to-date trends of the information society development.

We support the view that the system of higher vocational education at the present stage of social development must prepare specialists of the so called „globally open information society” as a stage of formation of the „noosphere civilization” [Ivanova 2008].

2. Characteristics of higher professional education development

According to experts, the Ukrainian higher professional education as a whole repeats the world tendency of transition from the high school of the industrial era to the high school of the postindustrial epoch, which is evidenced by a number of characteristic features formed for the last eighteen years.

Higher professional education in Ukraine is becoming more and more popular. Since 1990-s the number of higher educational establishments in the country has doubled (there were 149 such establishments in 1991 and 350 – in 2009) and the number of students has increased by almost 2.5 times, which produces an apparent positive effect on the Ukrainian society. However, the specific feature of the transition to the large scale higher education in Ukraine is that it does not take place at the background of a baby boom and economic expansion, as it was, for example, in the USA in 1960-s, but at the background of a lengthy demographic drop and a very complex economic situation.

The Ukrainian higher professional education is quickly commercializing, which is also a global tendency. The growth of the education sector on a paying basis and the increase of the number of private higher educational establishments in the world have been taking place since 1980-s. In Ukraine, this sector appeared in the middle of 1990-s and has been developing at a high rate. Whereas in 1995 the number of Ukrainian private institutions of higher education constituted 10% of their total number, by 2007 this figure already reached 21,6%. In 2010, a tendency is expected to further reduction of the number of students studying free of charge.

The general tendency was gradually shifting from the delivery of qualifications as a package of knowledge formally confirmed by the diploma to the delivery of a set of competencies. In Ukraine, these changes in the higher education system took place in 1990-s. The specific feature of this process was rapid humanitarization of the national higher education, the accelerated import of new specialties into Ukraine, particularly in the spheres of management and services, the emergence of new specialties ajoint to the old disciplines.

An important trend of the higher professional education sphere is the active development of new forms of instruction, such as business schools, corporate universities, training systems. The formation of this sector in Ukraine started not very long ago.

3. What is necessary to take into account while reforming higher professional education in the information society

With the transition of Ukraine to the conditions of postindustrial information society formation it is necessary to take into account the change of requirements to the higher professional education product.

The analysis shows that at present the Ukrainian society is turning away from the concept of a mono-professional life when the work and career development at one and the same working place was encouraged. In the XXI century, the western variant of mobility and flexibility of professional life is becoming prevalent. The government officially proclaimed the quick dynamics of changes in the types of professions and jobs. This makes a substantial impact on the organization of the

higher professional education system which must create conditions for preparing a specialist to the professional mobility implying continuous creative development and betterment through the whole life. At the heart of this approach is the new picture of the professional world, new type of a working man – “associative man” – a wide profile worker, dynamic, creative, capable of program-purposeful evaluation of a process, socially responsible, substituting “an organizational man” [Ivanova 2008]. The necessity of continuous updating of knowledge and mastering new professions and specialties is put forward as the main principle of the working activity. Thus, the education represents an open, non-linear system, capable of changes. The training of specialists capable of professional mobility is a major task of the modern higher professional education of Ukraine which unfortunately cannot yet be solved by the educational process of the early XXI century.

In addition, it is necessary to take into account the changes of requirements to the work force not only in the professional and qualification sphere but also in the social-psychological and sociocultural ones. Whereas the main moral and psychological qualities of a worker at the end of the last century were first of all discipline, comprehending one’s place in the organizational hierarchy and processing chain, promptitude in obeying, the new imperatives orient to greater initiative and self-reliance, capability of working in temporary working groups (teams), high motivation to retraining. That means that in the present-day situation, some new tendencies are outlined revealing themselves as a transition from narrow specialization and limited responsibility – to a wide professional accountability; from a planned career – to a flexible choice of ways of the professional development; from responsibility of managers for the personnel development – to the responsibility of workers themselves for their own development.

4. Changes in the content and organization of the educational process in the system of higher professional education

An important element of the information society development is the transformation of the institution of higher professional education, which presupposes, firstly, the realization of the concept of „education through the whole life” instead of the concept of „education for the whole life” with the emphasis on self-education; secondly, the integration of education, science (including the scientific research) and manufacture into the educational process, alliance of scientific organizations with educational establishments; thirdly, the conformity of the three components: the teaching staff training level, the level of educational technologies, the level (potentiality) of the students.

Continuous education is provided through a flexible, level-sensitive educational curriculum, modular structure of academic programs, provision of formal and informal education opportunities with the recording of their results, in-company forms of extended education etc.

The content of the education and the organization of instruction must meet the modern standards of scientific, technological and social development as well as the potential demands of the innovative economy (interdisciplinarity, competency building approach, active instruction methods, scientific component of the educational process, plunge into the real professional activity, academic and professional mobility etc.). The number of graduates and their qualifications must be matched with the current and potential demands of the labor market (programs of mass and up-market training, professional accreditation of educational programs, certification of graduates etc.).

Conclusion

In summary, we are of the opinion that the strategy of the innovative development of the higher professional education in contemporary Ukraine involves the training of a specialist that is qualified and reliable, able to meet competition at the labor market, capable of team working, goal-oriented, seeking for continuous education, competent in his profession and familiarized with related areas of the activity, ready for permanent career progress, social and professional mobility. This has determined the main vector of the Ukrainian reform development – the commitment to humanistic values and satisfaction of each student's needs.

The development of the higher professional education of Ukraine in the conditions of the information society formation is directed at changes in the purpose of education: reorientation from the mastering of the subject of the professional activity to the person's comprehension of one's own identification; humanization of education – the personality development based on the holistic world view, reflection development; further decentralization of educational establishments; combination of democratization and elitism of the education based on its diversification; transition from the classic disciplinary and professional training of a specialist to the multidisciplinary, problem-oriented continuous education; informatization, individualization and self-education; integration of education, science and manufacture, with the science outrunning education and influencing it and with the manufacture determining the model of the activity of a specialist; integration into the common European educational area.

Literature

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Abstract

The article analyses the challenges and possibilities for the education in the information society; reveals and substantiates the changes of the content and organization of the educational process as well as the background, trends and directions of the development of higher professional education in Ukraine.

Key words: information society, professional education, information technology.

Tendencje rozwoju procesu kształcenia zawodowego w szkole wyższej w społeczeństwie informatycznym: w kontekście Ukrainy

Streszczenie

Artykuł zawiera analizę wyzwań i możliwości kształcenia społeczeństwa informatycznego; ukazuje zmiany organizacji procesu kształcenia, jak również tło, trendy oraz kierunki rozwoju kształcenia zawodowego w szkole wyższej na Ukrainie.

Słowa kluczowe: społeczeństwo informacyjne, edukacja zawodowa, technologia informacyjna.