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MEDIA EDUCATION AGAINST THE BACKGROUND OF CHANGES IN THE CONCEPT OF THE 21ST CENTURY UNIVERSITY

Introduction

The aim of the article is to present two model types of university: the one of a research institution and the other of an entrepreneurial university (university as knowledge enterprise) in the context of the development of media literacy. The author considers it a fundamental type of civilization competences that is indispensable to an active, autonomous and conscious functioning in a knowledge-based society, information society and – finally – in the globalized world. The article points out to two different ideologies and approaches to education in relation to each of the models and to the consequences of their application as regards the graduate's profile. An important role is played by the attitude to tradition and the requirements of the changing world (the compatibility, flexibility and adaptability to the conditions of the post-modern world that is dominated by new technologies). Media literacy should always be associated with the three key pillars of media education, i.e. teaching about the media, through the media and for the media.

At present two model types of university are coexistent. The first type, the one of a research university, is based on the Humboldt's philosophy of education, where educating is the result of the research being conducted. Such a university, which is financed mainly by public means, can enjoy some relative independence in the field of the courses offered and an autonomy of its research. In Polish reality the model is functioning in state universities, which deal with scientific research, cherish their own traditions and develop the so-called academic culture related mainly to their scientific environment. One of the significant features of that model is a continuous and simultaneous creation of metanarratives and autonarratives that help maintain a traditional *modus vivendi* of the academic environment and its fixed rituals. The rituals may be considered in terms of the Erving Goffman's dramaturgical approach. The model aims at a certain stability and a relative independence of the environmental change (the pressure of the market included). A research university maintains the tradition of the so-called high (egalitarian) culture and – as it is assumed – it prepares the so-called social elites

that are formed by individuals with versatile knowledge, cultural refinement and civic awareness¹, i.e. people who are sensitive to humane values and engaged in the processes of knowledge acquisition (creation) and, consequently, in approaching the essence of reality. The area of interest of the “scholars” is not limited by commercial restrictions or the pressure on the part of students, - the “recipients “ of knowledge - i.e. potential customers. The students choose from the cultural and education offers that are provided by a university. They are attracted to a particular field of study either by its prestige (studies in medicine, law, psychology have always been attractive) or by a person with authority, the so-called academic star. The master – disciple relationship has now become a student – star relationship.

The second type – a entrepreneurial university or a university as a knowledge enterprise - is subject to market mechanisms; it focuses on servicing the customers and endeavors to meet the changing requirements of the environment and the labor market. That model is based on a managerial system and exists in non-public schools of tertiary education, being financed mainly from the resources of private investors.² It is the pressure of the market that basically decides on the educational offer and fields of study. Thus, such universities are substantially adaptable, they react in a flexible way to the changes in the environment, the trends on the labor market including.

Table 1 illustrates the differences between the above mentioned model approaches.

Table 1

Research university	Entrepreneurial university
<u>Ideal graduate characteristics: an</u> educated individual with general intellectual skills and culture, passionate in gaining knowledge and abilities to participate in civic life;	Ideal graduate characteristics: an individual qualified in a particular area, with specialist knowledge and skills;
Deals with research, i.e. scientific investigations are simultaneous to educational activities that are closely related to the research carried out by university staff;	Deals with customer service, i.e. the educational offer is adjusted to the needs of potential students and is directed towards <i>praxis</i> ;
It is financed mainly from public resources;	It is financed mainly from private resources;
It is relatively independent and autonomous as regards the research;	It meets its customers’ (including private business and institutions) needs as regards

¹ Cf. D. Hejwosz, 2010, *Edukacja uniwersytecka i kreowanie elit społecznych*, Kraków

² M. Wójcicka, 2010, *Uniwersytet. Stabilność i zmiana*, Warszawa, p. 34

	scientific investigations and the educational offer;
It concentrates on cherishing tradition, creation of academic culture and the ethos of the humanities.	It is strongly dependent on market mechanisms, concentrates on applied research and the opportunities of its implementation; it follows the culture of business.

Source: Author's research

The two approaches are based on different philosophies of education; they refer to separate graduate profiles and have a different attitude to the changes in the environment (particularly to the requirements of the labor market). The philosophy of education is perceived either as an overt or hidden educational program that aims at reaching particular educational targets and effects; it influences the accepted academic culture and the teachers' attitude to their profession and development. The attitudes, values and convictions that result from the accepted philosophy of education in a particular institution determine the contents and the form of educational activities and the relationships among the faculty, the office staff and the students. They also have an impact on the relationships with other institutions functioning in the closer and further environment.

The processes of the commercialization and democratization of knowledge that were initiated in 1990s and occur mainly in the sector of educational services, as well as the increasing demographic decline have resulted in the struggle between universities for students and state subsidies. Although a research university focuses on the duration and pressure of tradition, it also applies some elements of the competitive model and is increasingly more sensitive to the requirements of the market and the commercialization of knowledge (among other things, it promotes the applied research and the so-called ordered specialties). Moreover, a "humanization" of technical universities and schools of higher vocational education shows by the appearance of specialist courses in philosophy, sociology and cultural studies. Surprisingly enough, that happens irrespectively of the decision makers, whose educational policy does not support the promotion of such fields of knowledge or the research in these areas of science.

There is a distinct diversification of the educational offer both in public and private schools and the programs that are the most attractive and desired by the market (e.g. law, architecture, psychology) are offered by the private ones. There is a dramatic increase in the

bureaucracy of the whole education system (e.g. in the form of the so-called national framework of education) which transforms the educators/scientists (the hitherto mentors, guides or the initiators of investigations and specialist dialogue) into clerks. Consequently, there is a gradual shift from the ideas of an educated person and a traditional (research) university that promotes comprehensive knowledge, cultural refinement and the desire to discover and explore the world to the concept of a human being that is qualified in a particular field of knowledge. Ironically, that revaluation was caused by philosophical trends themselves, which deconstructed the category of truth as an absolute value. A bright graduate is replaced by a narrowly qualified specialist. That phenomenon is favored by the increasing offer of practical activities (internships, apprenticeships, simulations of tasks and social skills trainings) and the requirements of the employers themselves, who want to employ the so-called specialists and not theoreticians or “academics”. An increasing emphasis is put on training the communication and psychological competences (active listening, influencing the others, ability to act under pressure, creative thinking). Thus, the knowledge required by students and employers should be practical and functional in order to be applied in particular tasks and particular working environment. Moreover, stress is laid on the so-called professional flexibility, i.e. the ability to acquire further knowledge or even to change the profession several times in one’s life, which is in line with the Z. Bauman’s concept of postmodern reality, in which one profession that used to be learnt for life is now replaced by the necessity of constant development and the need to adjust to the changing market trends.

Such trends correspond to the present preferences of students and – in my opinion – to the concept of the Bologna system. Firstly, there are several students who take more than one program and several second degree students choose completely different programs from the ones they took in their first degree studies. Secondly, there is a substantial number of adult learners (including the ones that are professionally active) who – with the aim of changing the hitherto profession or improving their skills – take part-time or postgraduate studies. Thus, the pressure of the market, competition and the employers themselves is enormous; people who abstain from education may consequently find themselves somehow socially excluded. A significant number of such decisions is the result of the so-called learned helplessness, which is the consequence of a prolonged period of being unemployed.

According to the European Framework of Competences, the key competences for lifelong learning are:

- Communication in the mother tongue;
- Communication in foreign languages;

- Mathematical competence and basic competences in science and technology;
- Digital competence;
- Learning to learn;
- Social and civic competences;
- Sense of initiative and entrepreneurship;
- Cultural awareness and expression.³

The acquisition of the above listed competences (unified for all EU citizens) should result in personal fulfillment, social inclusion, active citizenship and competitiveness on the labor market of a knowledge-based society. The authors of the recommendation claim that all the training and education systems in member states ought to support young people in the development of the competences and give the adults the opportunities to upgrade continuously and regularly their qualifications and to develop the selected skills.

In Poland the education system (on the level of higher education, including qualification and development programs) is well developed. The educational activities are run by state and private schools of higher education, as well as by units related to culture such as publishing houses, libraries, centers of culture, to education, e.g. Regional Methodological Centers and to business, e.g. private training companies.

Such a peculiar proletarianization of intelligentsia and a common access to education (its democratization) result in the fact that a 21st century University turns into a knowledge enterprise or a Vocational School of Higher Education. Consequently, the basic role of such an institution is to meet the economic needs of the society and to prepare students to particular professional roles. Thus, university is becoming mainly an institution of cultural and economic reproduction and – to a lesser degree, if at all – it shapes the personality of its graduates by the disciple – master relationship. The characteristic activity area of the university of the first type, i.e. generating the feeling of uncertainty (as regards the research work) and then the ability to cope with it (as regards educational activities) have been replaced by the strategies of survival in a variable and competitive environment that consists of many public and private entities providing similar or comparable services. The primary mission of University (based on the pressure of tradition, the ethos of the humanities, the

³ Key competences for lifelong learning – European reference framework – a file in the Recommendation of the European Parliament and the Council of Europe of the 18 December 2006.
http://eur-lex.europa.eu/lexuniserv/site/pl/oj/2006/l_394/l_39420061230pl00100018.pdf

creation of intellectual culture and preparation to civic life) subsides for the sake of the ethos of the applied science and the education in line with the laws of the market and business culture. The egalitarization of education – in accordance with the law of demand and supply – results in the depreciation of the university diploma and the saturation of the market with potential employees with similar qualifications. Consequently, it leads to the increase of unemployment and the rise of frustration. Thus, a new category of **“qualified” louts** emerges, who are doomed to vegetate for years in their family homes or to emigrate. The withdrawal from the Humboldt’s concept of university to the idea of vocational schools of higher education leads to the specialization of knowledge, which frequently happens at the cost of the loss of the ability to gain the knowledge and to verify it, not to mention the specific attitude of investigation eagerness and epistemophilia, which are practically completely neglected in the present-day model of education that is fragmentary, superficial and target-based.

On the other hand, the multitude of institutions that deal with higher education provides some outlet for social energy and gives the opportunity to teach organizational culture that would be inaccessible for some individuals (as autonomous beings) in the system of mass democracy. This is due to the fact that university of every type plays some crucial functions: socializing (social inclusion, internalization of values, language, etc.) and identity ones (indicating potential directions of the development of skills, abilities and predispositions). It should be pointed out that a research university that is incapable of any change, i.e. inadaptable, would promptly turn into a self-confined and hermetic “ivory tower”, where the research and teaching are inadequate to the requirements of the present-day world that is often referred to as a media civilization or a knowledge society. There are many other relevant terms: information society, the society of communication democracy, post-biological society and many other. They all suggest a growing significance of new communication and information technologies in the processes of social communication, especially in the fields of politics, education, art and culture.

Several barriers - economic, psychological and political in character – have to be overcome if a system introduction of media education for various age and professional groups is to be carried out. The lack of will on the part of educational decision makers as regards the introduction of a comprehensive policy in media education results most frequently from their lack of understanding of the purposefulness and significance of such a project. On

the other hand, according to the EU or UNESCO recommendations and directives, media literacy has several functions. Among others, it

- contributes to a sustainable progress and development of media skills and to the creation of author's messages and innovative media products;
- enables an active, thoughtful and critical use of cultural media and the knowledge of cultural (local, national and global) heritage ;
- protects children and young people against harmful influence of media and media violence (iconic violence including);
- prevents various forms of social exclusion and the emancipation of social groups that are marginalized;
- promotes alternative media and independent media productions, which may lead to the diversification of cultural offer and information sources;
- supports the development of social projects and various co-operation forms among media users;
- supports the development of knowledge and information societies;
- contributes to the rise of civic activity and complete participation in civic society;
- helps counteract media persuasion and manipulation, including marketing practices that are applied by media;
- promotes creativity and artistic media expression;
- promotes humanitarian values: tolerance, equality, solidarity and human rights;
- helps people make conscious social, economic and cultural decisions on the basis of a critical analysis of media messages;
- helps create new educational environment and forms of teaching.

According to The Moscow Declaration on Media and Information Literacy of 28th June 2012 signed on the International Conference under the auspices of UNESCO (Information for All Programme), information and media literacy is defined as “a combination of knowledge, attitudes, skills, and practices required to access, analyze, evaluate, use, produce, and communicate information and knowledge in creative, legal and ethical ways that respect human rights. Media and information literate individuals can use diverse media, information sources and channels in their private, professional and public lives. They know when and what information they need and what for, and where and how to obtain it. They understand who has created that information and why, as well as the roles, responsibilities and functions

of media, information providers and memory institutions. They can analyze information, messages, beliefs and values conveyed through the media and any kind of content producers, and can validate information they have found and produced against a range of generic, personal and context-based criteria. MIL competencies thus extend beyond information and communication technologies to encompass learning, critical thinking and interpretive skills across and beyond professional, educational and societal boundaries. MIL addresses all types of media (oral, print, analogue and digital) and all forms and formats of resources.”⁴

Conclusion

With the consideration of various forms of higher education, it is important to adjust the issues of media and information literacy in such a way that their introduction to the curricula should correspond to the particular philosophy of education and the promoted university culture, graduate’s and educational profiles, etc.

It is worth emphasizing that the tasks that are set for media education and the ones that result from the way that media and information literacy is perceived, correspond to both university models and – as it may be assumed – to their hybrid variations that have some of the features typical for both types. This is due to the fact that media and information literacy should be perceived as a key component both of the ideal of an educated individual (which is promoted by research universities) and of a qualified one (as promoted by entrepreneurial universities).

The Universal character of media and information competencies is related to the possibility of their multi-level application in all key areas of life, especially in the case of people with the so-called higher education. The ability to use media in an active way, to communicate effectively, to acquire and process information and to decode critically the messages results in active and creative personal and professional lives. On the other hand, the lack of such competencies, especially in long-term, leads to eventual exclusion and social isolation.

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Abstract

The aim of the article is to present the relations between different philosophies of higher education and the acquisition of media literacy that is indispensable to the effective and active functioning in the present-day society. The significance of media competences is emphasized by such terms as information society, network society, culture of convergence or the society of screens. Media literacy plays a crucial role in all key areas of human activities and, consequently, it should become a significant element of higher education irrespectively of the accepted type of the philosophy of education.