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THE ROLE AND PLACE OF UNIVERSITIES IN THE "KNOWLEDGE SOCIETY"

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ABSTRACT

The article substantiates the idea that a rational orientation in the perception of the surrounding world is the result of the processes of interaction, opposition and mutual influence of various knowledge systems within the university. As a result of all processes occurring within the university system, the level of rationality as a whole increases, which is especially important in a society largely based on scientific knowledge and dependent on its further development.

The conclusion is made that in the context of the development of a knowledge society, universities will have to evolve at the same rapid pace as the world around them is changing, but they should not lose the most important components of their traditional role in generating knowledge and its transmission to society.

Keywords: knowledge society, university, education, industrial and post-industrial society, knowledge and practice, rationality.

INTRODUCTION

The “knowledge society” [1] is a concept of a strategic nature, as well as the concepts of “postmodern society”, “post-industrial society”, “high-risk society”, “information society” and many others. Each of these concepts focuses on certain aspects of modern development. The main content components of the concept of "knowledge society", as the name implies, are knowledge and education.

Knowledge, it is argued, is becoming, along with capital, the main factor in the development of modern production. In materialized form, knowledge appears in the form of technology. It includes inventive potential and scientific discoveries. The process is controlled by the issuance of patents for property rights and the use of existing achievements. However, knowledge also plays an important role in the application of human labor. The knowledge society puts forward the thesis that this role is becoming increasingly important: many economic processes require not only the ability to solve problems formulated by someone, but require participation and high personal responsibility [2]. At the same time, we are not talking about people working independently, but about dependent workers who no longer work in the conditions of a culture of "order - execution", but in a culture of responsibility for the process and its results. In a large number of industries, the production of a particular product is not the only result: activity is understood much more broadly, it is necessary to search for systemic solutions to various kinds of problems that can be constructively solved only by including the subjectivity of living labor, i.e. through the use of knowledge of various participants in the process, which, unlike the materialized results of applying knowledge in the form of technology, is hardly controlled by the employer and in most cases is introduced into the process voluntarily.

German researcher A. Polterman gives an example of a modern approach to understanding the role of the automotive industry in meeting the needs of a modern person in mobility. Automakers do not just produce cars as a means of transportation, but work in accordance with the demand of the consumer, who often sees the car as an addition to the bicycle, urban public transport, necessary in cases where they cannot completely solve his problem. In these situations, for example, such a tool as car sharing is used, which requires a change in the strategy and tactics of the manufacturer, in particular, special studies of consumer behavior and its causes, the development of special methods for such analysis [3].

Education is the second substantive component of the concept of "knowledge society". In this context, it is argued that the requirements for the subjectivity of labor resources in society include the requirement for a higher level and quality of education. At the same time, on the one hand, we are talking about higher qualifications, which necessarily accompanies an increase in the level of complexity of technological processes. Even an ordinary car mechanic must have multidisciplinary knowledge in a number of areas: mechanical engineering, electronics, computer technology, telecommunications, systems engineering and control systems. At the same time, abilities that are not directly part of the employee's functionality are in demand: the ability to communicate, cooperate with colleagues, analyze processes in a longer term, as well as the ability to withstand a crisis. We are talking about the formation of subjectivity, which can be used in the economy in a variety of contexts. In the concept of the knowledge society, education appears as a decisive prerequisite for modern economic activity. Accordingly, the purpose of obtaining education is its applicability in labor activity.

In general, the concept of a "knowledge society" at a certain stage proved to be extremely successful. It has been adopted by the European Union as the basis for a strategy for vocational training and higher education. At the same time, all types of educational institutions are called as strategic actors of development in this direction: universities, technical universities, business schools, regardless of the form of ownership and organizational and legal form. For example, in the strategy document "Europe 2020" education occupies a significant place. The specification of the problems of the development of higher education is carried out in numerous EU documents [4]. Efforts to improve the education system, aimed at increasing its efficiency, require not only the selection of the content of educational courses and programs, but also the diversification of the types and organizational forms of educational institutions. It should be noted that similar efforts were made in Russia, although the results were less significant than expected [5].

The knowledge society requires the constant orientation of all types of education towards the development of abilities necessary in the field of employment, as well as the constant improvement of professional extrafunctional abilities that are not directly related to labor operations: the ability to make independent decisions, communication skills, the desire to constantly expand and deepen the individual's knowledge, etc.

Education also plays a significant role in the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development's comparative studies, which have strong political influence, including on higher education policy, calling for countries to graduate as many young people as possible and to ensure that more young people started and graduated from universities. It is this group of countries that is the most prepared for the challenges of the knowledge society, which set

certain goals for the policy of the state. The growing number of students is considered an indicator of success. Science focuses on education, and on education of higher quality, with serious consequences for the economy and society. Since in this case we are talking about goals, it is necessary to investigate the question of what the reverse side of this process looks like: a focus on education and the ability to be included in the employment system, as well as achieving greater independence and responsibility of human labor. How true is the statement that the knowledge society is replacing the industrial society? As in any other development process, the additional question is who will benefit and who will lose from the ongoing changes. Isn't there a kind of "educational panic" that can be observed not only in schools but also in kindergartens in the most highly developed countries as a reaction to this focus on education?

Many studies claim that the "knowledge society" chronologically follows the industrial society. First of all, the main tendencies of its development are discussed and their political assessment is given, moreover, “post-industrial society” is considered as a framework concept for a “disintegrating” society. In postmodern philosophy, where the key concept is “subject” **[6]**, such disintegration reflects the main trend of the 21st century.

The main question in the course of the discussion is how society should be organized in the conditions of a new cycle of technological development (the sixth cycle), which imposes completely different qualification requirements in order to take into account the interests of the majority of people. This approach provides for completely different correlations than those generally accepted in the concept of the "knowledge society", in which technological innovations and the new qualification requirements associated with them are reflected directly in the requirements for education and knowledge as such. In a critical discussion from the standpoint of an industrial society, the main question is how these trends are consistent with models of "general welfare". This question was directly posed by newly elected US President Donald Trump in his inaugural address on January 20, 2017: “Americans want good schools for their children, safe neighborhoods for their families, and good jobs for themselves…. But most of our citizens live in a different world: mothers and children are hostages of poverty in our cities; rusted factories are scattered like tombstones across the expanses of our country; the education system is overflowing with money, but our young and brilliant students are devoid of knowledge; and crime, and criminal gangs, and drugs that have stolen too many lives, have stolen from our country its untapped potential ... Every decision about trade, taxes, immigration issues, foreign affairs will be made only in the interests of American families. We must protect our borders from the destructive influence of other countries that manufacture our products, stealing from our companies and destroying our labor capital. …We will return our works. We will take back our borders. We will return our wealth. And we'll get our dreams back. We will build new roads and highways and bridges and airports and tunnels and railways throughout our beautiful country. We will bring people back from welfare support back to the work of rebuilding our country with American hands and with the help of American labor. We will follow two simple ones: buy American and hire Americans…” **[7]**.

In general, D. Trump's speech contains an appeal to the ideals and values typical of an industrial society, i.e. reflects a conservative ideology that has nothing to do with the knowledge society, which generally contradicts the ideas of globalization, decentralization and deconcentration of all basic activities, individualization and subjectivation of public life. Critics

of the knowledge society proceed from the fear that all its manifestations, including rapid technological progress (primarily in the field of information technology, but not only), will lead to the formation of a new split in society: into those who benefit from these changes (entrepreneurs, investors, highly skilled workers), and those who lose (people with low qualifications, the unemployed, the marginalized, etc.). So, in many cities of developed countries, for example, in London, there are not enough school teachers and paramedical personnel, because. the level of their wages does not allow them not only to purchase, but also to rent housing in the British capital. At the same time, even in the conditions of the most radical technological changes, it is difficult to imagine a school without a teacher (and he ceases to be a highly qualified and highly paid worker) or a hospital where there are no nurses and paramedics (they do not need the knowledge "higher education" so valued in society), as well as nurses. , cleaners, etc., who receive no education at all, but perform extremely important social functions. Objectively, the center of the development of the "knowledge society" should be a large city, but in reality its role can be minimized by the possibilities of new information technologies. Nevertheless, educational institutions still remain the most important element of the urban system [8].

In the course of the processes described above, many institutions of the industrial society that form a person and orient him in the environment disappear, which also leads to the disappearance of "people's parties". In parallel, the process of strengthening the role of right-wing and far-right nationalist parties, acting from the positions of "national revival", opposition to migrants, etc., can also take place. All of them have nothing to do with the "knowledge society". Trade unions do not protect the interests of labor as such, but represent the most qualified workers, and so on. As many authors formulate [9], "farewell" to the industrial society means the disappearance of the division of society into classes, the refusal to support a person in case he loses his job, i.e. unemployment, because subjectivation and individualization of activity implies that during periods when an employee is not associated with a specific organization or institution, he or she individually improves himself to increase his competitiveness in the world of work or works in self-employment mode, i.e. on himself.

Education in this context is presented as a possible "social lift", giving a chance to move from the category of "excluded" from the knowledge society to the category of "included", but whether a person can achieve this movement depends only on himself. The former contradictions between labor and capital, which are softened by state social policy, should be replaced by individualized processes in which everyone fights for a place in the sun on their own. Already in the XX century. in highly developed countries, there has been a tendency to strengthen the connection between a person's origin (well-being and family education level) and his own results in the process of using education as the basis for success in life and work. Thus, the majority of students in German gymnasiums are the children of "academicians," as graduates of higher educational institutions, primarily universities, are called in Germany.

The concept of the "knowledge society" and its reverse side, which has already been mentioned, is the subject of an article by the Russian author D.V. Efremenko [10], who emphasizes the fact that the development of society in this paradigm gives rise to new risks, since the complexity of many processes increases, primarily communicative ones, where nature (the biological essence of man and the surrounding world), society and the artificial environment generated by it,

objective and subjective, past, present and future are intertwined. At the same time, the interactions are non-linear in nature and form a synergy of both positive and negative directions, as a result of which the reproduction of risks expands.

Under such conditions, universities are systems characterized by a high level of stability; organizations that bring together a large number of members, representing an alliance that can be entered and left, which is located in a specific single place, bears the same name for a long period of existence, i.e. has exceptional stability in comparison with other modern structures, such as large corporations, which also have numerous branches in all parts of the world. The exceptional stability of universities as their root characteristic is emphasized in his work by Rudolf Stichwee [11]. Accordingly, universities are forced to constantly reaffirm their right to generate knowledge in competition with other organizations, in particular research institutes, scientific foundations, international teams of scientists, etc. Moreover, these centers of production of the main product of society, knowledge, which are different in nature, have undoubted competitive advantages over them, because may have no property at all (expensive buildings, fixed equipment, full-time employees), i.e. incur much lower costs.

Without generating new knowledge, the university not only loses its position as an organization with specific functions, but also ceases to attract students, because cannot provide them with the formation of innovative competencies necessary for “inclusion” in the process of moving towards success. If we analyze this problem from the point of view presented at the time by N. Luhmann [12], the education system, being self-referential, “does not hear” the demand of the economic system (for specialists who are mainly focused on practical activities) and young people as part of the social system, which is the main consumer of educational services (for a shorter time of preparation for practical activities). It is impossible not to take into account the cardinal differences between the ideas about "knowledge", "education", "cultural level", existing in specific national states. Relatively recently, a young Russian manager working for an American company, having returned from a corporate event held in the United States, sharply negatively assessed the general level of his American colleagues, who, in his opinion, "can only do business." He himself, in addition to managerial training, has a university education in the humanities, speaks two foreign languages, and is seriously interested in art and modern philosophy. These differences are especially clearly visible when comparing the Russian and American systems, which were formed in completely different natural, economic and political conditions. At the same time, in the education system, the university, being the largest organization in terms of scale, is the least able to communicate in a "foreign" language. The desire of research universities [13], which currently dominate the landscape of higher education, to conduct fundamental research, primarily in the field of exact and natural sciences, as well as medicine, contradicts the primordial essence of the university as a center of philosophical, theological, historical and other humanitarian knowledge. In the modern world, the disunity of differentiated functional systems is intensified and aggravated by the intensive commercialization of higher education and research, which requires quick results, which in itself is impossible in fundamental science, and even more so in the humanities.

In the knowledge society, the production of “knowledge” itself as its main product is also differentiated. In fact, knowledge is generated in all functional areas according to their needs. At the same time, neither religion, as it once did in the Middle Ages, nor the university have a

monopoly on this production. Economists point out that a modern efficient economy must be based on scientific knowledge, which also forms new technologies and approaches to solving problems. Moreover, such an economy carries out numerous interactions and has interrelations with science (as a separate functional system), upbringing, education, and research (in this case, we are talking about applied research). This interaction and this interconnection is defined in the language of a self-referential economic system as technology and human capital: two main factors in the creation of a modern economic product. Thus, the system provides its own autonomy.

The university has to constantly resolve the dilemma: should it focus only on "scientific knowledge" in the narrow sense of the word, or should it "open doors" to other types of knowledge, get involved in applied research and focus on the needs of a new type of economy. To understand the place and role of the university in the knowledge society, it is necessary to update its relationship with the environment, in which technology and human capital should be singled out as the main factors affecting the functioning of the economy in the context of the development of the knowledge society, as well as the professionalization of all types of activities in any functional systems in connection with the production of knowledge in each of them and a rational orientation in the perception of the surrounding world. These subsystems are currently singled out as the main elements of the external environment of the university in the knowledge society by Rudolf Stichwee.

As we have already mentioned, the sixth technological order, which is increasingly spreading in the most highly developed countries from an economic point of view, is characterized by the development of fundamentally new technologies. So, by 2059, experts predict the following results: 90% of all energy will be produced by renewable energy sources, newspapers will exist only in electronic form, humanity will be completely free from blindness and pain, a team of robots will be able to defeat the best football team in the world, robots will be able to show emotions and love [14]. The need to develop new technologies is one of the expectations that the external environment places on the university. In recent years, many discussions have been devoted to the question of the extent to which the university is able to respond to this challenge [15]. In developed countries, two-thirds of all technological research and development is already carried out not in laboratories and faculties of universities, and not even in specialized research institutions, but in departments of firms and companies themselves, which invest significant resources in this activity, because innovations significantly increase their competitiveness. Moreover, for many researchers, employment in such departments is more attractive than teaching or purely scientific activities, because. this dramatically increases not only the material capabilities of a specialist, but also allows him to get a faster and brighter result of the study, its practical application.

However, in principle it is wrong to limit the problem of the development and application of technologies only to technological processes associated with material production. With the expansion of this concept, it will also include "social technologies", in the development of which the role of universities remains exceptional, and the university itself is indispensable. The modern knowledge system is based on the co-evolution of both technological subsystems [16], which completely eliminates the fundamentally false idea of the reflexive nature of the

humanities and social sciences, which allegedly do not have the ability to influence the formation of the modern social order [17].

Like all modern problems, the problem of human capital is extremely complex and controversial. In the last thirty years, the need to form generalized competencies in the family, school, and university has been increasingly emphasized, allowing them to further apply the knowledge, skills and abilities included in them in various fields of activity, continuing to expand and deepen them, and also adapt them to specific areas during all life. The requirement of generalization of formed competencies brings the concept of human capital closer to the economic concept of capital, which is of a universal nature.

As one of the characteristic features of functional systems in the current state, their need for professionally trained workers can be singled out, which is a rather serious challenge for the university in the 21st century: from the generation and transfer of general knowledge ("studium generale". This term, which arose even in ancient Greece, denoted a place where students from different cities and countries could get an education. Subsequently, it belonged to the most famous universities, where they taught, first of all, theology, philosophy and other "high sciences". In modern terminology, it is often used to refer to the teaching of disciplines For example, in the German Higher Schools of Public Administration lectures "studium generale" are given in parallel with the educational process on a variety of topics in the humanities and natural sciences, which are not included in the curriculum of these educational institutions. institutions) to the professional training of specialists in fairly narrow practice-oriented areas. The figures also testify to the presence of this trend: if in 1970 US universities issued 25,000 bachelor's degrees in mathematics and only 1,600 bachelor's degrees in the direction of "Parks, Recreation, Leisure and Fitness", then after 25 years this ratio changed to in favor of the second direction: more than 15,000 - "Parks, recreations ..." and only 12,000 - mathematics [18]. The example of the United States is extremely indicative, because. It is American universities that have been using the two-tier system for a long time, which makes practical orientation, especially in terms of undergraduate education, extremely important. In general, it can be stated that the development of mass university education is inextricably linked with the professionalization of the educational process.

A rational orientation in the perception of the surrounding world is formed almost exclusively due to the university and itself forms the specific identity of the university as a creative research team and educational institution. The university tradition and, above all, higher education systems in Europe are characterized by the integration of various knowledge systems at the university, which has made the university the most significant as the main carrier of knowledge. R. Stichwee [19] points out that the university has a system of religious knowledge, which is reflected in the theological understanding of issues of faith and religious worship, as well as a system of artistic knowledge associated with art. The interaction of scientific knowledge with other knowledge systems within the university stimulates the latter to scientific understanding of the processes of the surrounding world and a more systematic analysis of the ongoing changes. Thus, a rational orientation in the perception of the surrounding world is the result of the processes of interaction, opposition and mutual influence of various knowledge systems within the university. As a result of all processes occurring within the university system, the level of rationality as a whole increases, which is especially

important in a society largely based on scientific knowledge and dependent on its further development.

Summarizing the above, it can be stated that in the context of the development of a knowledge society, universities will have to evolve at the same rapid pace as the world around them is changing, but they should not lose the most important components of their traditional role in generating knowledge and its transmission to society.

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