

Anna Barwińska-Małajowicz

Inseparability of two dimensions : local and global as the conditio 'sine qua non' regarding the quality of contemporary education at a university level

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**INSEPARABILITY OF TWO DIMENSIONS: LOCAL AND GLOBAL
AS THE *CONDITIO SINE QUA NON* REGARDING
THE QUALITY OF CONTEMPORARY EDUCATION AT A UNIVERSITY LEVEL**

Anna Barwińska-Małajowicz, PhD

University of Rzeszów
Faculty of Economy
Department of Theory of Economics and International Relations
e-mail: abarmal@gmail.com

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Abstract

Globalisation is full of paradox, however it features a strong feedback with the localization and regionalism which can be observed at all levels of political and social and economic life. Due to variability of actions impacting the quality of education at different levels, the objective of this elaboration is to focus on dependencies taking place mainly in two different dimension of establishing the quality of university level education; basically, in the global and local dimension (partially, also in the regional one). The main objective of this elaboration is an attempt to reply to the question whether the nature and kind of this type of connections and theory impact on the quality of university level education.

Keywords: Global Outlook, Higher Education and Research Institutions, Regional Economic Activity: Growth, Development, and Changes, State and Local Government: Education.

JEL Classification: F01, I23, R11, H75.

*Globalism – opportunity and a threat.
Powerful technique linked with a presumptuous ignorance, zealous fanaticism,
and ravenous egoism. Adding to this unwillingness to learn,
indifference to the fate of a person, lack of kindness and goodness.*

(R. Kapuściński)

Introduction

The contemporary world develops at a staggering pace. At every step we can observe a series of constructive changes and challenges, yet also many tensions, conflicts, and various threats. The following new solutions occur at all life dimensions: political, economic, social, and/or cultural.

We are witnessing an advancing globalisation process featuring both positive and negative outcomes; yet, at the same time, determine transformations in human's thinking and acting. "Globalisation contains a specific type of tension between: a "particular" and "universal", "unit" and "general", "local" and "trans-local". It is commonly reckoned that this process is based on intensification of general-worldwide social relations that bind distant places, a process causing compression of time and space, in other words "shrinking of the world". Its immanent feature is also participation in local cultures and societies. The said two dimensions require a common treatment, description, and interpretation"¹. The problem of the "global" and "local" relation is becoming more often an important component of the globalisation process analysed within the scope of social sciences.

Globalisation processes arise many questions and doubts. One of them is a question on education and its quality at variable levels of education. Quality of education may be examined from numerous perspectives, usually tightly linked with each other. Globalisation is full of paradox, however it features a strong feedback with the localization and regionalism which can be observed at all levels of political and social and economic life. Due to variability of actions impacting the quality of education at different levels, the objective of this elaboration is to focus on dependencies taking place mainly in two different dimension of establishing the quality of university level education; basically, in the global and local dimension (partially, also in the regional one). The main objective of this elaboration is an attempt to reply to the question whether the nature and kind of this type of connections and theory impact on the quality of university level education. It should be emphasised that the volume of the elaboration makes it impossible to fully develop the said topic.

1. University education – global dimension

Due to the complexity of the problem connected with a global dimension of the university education, this sub-chapter deals with only the selected matters in this topic.

The globalisation process should not be treated as “top down plan extended for a huge scale, threatening the cultural variability or a non-saturated, globalised commercialism”²². However, it should be indicated that globalisation may limit the national and state sovereignty at variable dimensions of the social and economic life, including also the education sector.

On the other hand, it should be stated that globalisation provides a series of positive changes to universities, for example in respect of a flow of knowledge. The current level of students’ and lecturers’ mobility, number of common projects, and size of the trans-national cooperation between universities has become an unprecedented phenomenon. A thesis may be formed that the global education market is developing even more intensively. Currently, “there is no ideal for the national-oriented university education, education oriented at instilling national identity, as well as building and joining the state community (hence, the Humboldtovsky university idea, defined as the national state’s arm, is breaking apart)”²³.

Due to globalisation-related transformations, also the university education financing sector is subject to transformations. “Public university education across the world is not an exceptional part of the public sector: it is not the case in public declarations, nor in the society’s feelings, nor in the practical categories (e.g. in the financing sector)”²⁴. More often one can come across a thesis on public financing of the university education sector under new principles characteristic for trans-national corporations.

In the era of a progressing globalisation, universities have to face – apart from traditional teaching – a new challenge aiming at reflecting the manner in which globalisation impacts the society and its operation. Due to the development of knowledge and its increasing role in our life, universities more and more often are treated as centres of modern society, with their role in shaping social, cultural, and economic relations in a region. New theories and ideas and innovations are erected at universities as well as research and scientific institutions. Solutions and initiatives proposed by universities are becoming a sort of proposals for dealing with challenges and use of opportunities and possibilities stemming from globalisation.

2. “Strategy 2020” – educational objectives

Facing globalisation, regional activities are becoming necessary i.e. because global institutions cannot centrally manage all processes taking place in individual countries and

societies. Regional processes, therefore, obtain a new significance, that depends on a global dimension – regions need to be noticed by the global system due to the place that they can be found in, with an example on significance of actions undertaken within the scope of the European integration process.

On 3 March 2010 the European Commission published an announcement regarding the new economic strategy of the European Union for the years 2010–2020 “**Europe 2020 – Strategies for smart, sustainable, and inclusive growth**”⁵. Three priorities were presented in the strategy having the largest significance for the economic revival in Europe:

- 1) **smart growth** – connected with the development of economy based on knowledge and innovation,
- 2) **permanent and sustainable growth** – based on increasing the effectiveness of resources utilisation and university competitiveness, and ecologic economy,
- 3) **growth favouring liquidation of social exclusion** – aiming at obtaining a high employment level and high level of economic, social, and territorial cohesion⁶.

Based on the said priorities, five pro-development objectives have been indicated for the successive decade, where the key role of education and training for the smart, sustainable, and favouring social inclusion development was emphasised. In the overall concept, the said objectives include employment, research and innovations, changes of climate and energy, education, and combating poverty. In the detailed overview, they have been specified in the following manner:

Objective 1:

reaching the employment ratio at the level of 75% – employment ratio of persons between 20–64 years-of-age should increase from 69% to at least 75%,

Objective 2:

improving the conditions of running research and development activities – investments in the research and development (R&D) should amount to 3% of the EU’s GDP; moreover, the European Commission will establish a ratio reflecting the effectiveness of research and development and innovative activities,

Objective 3:

decreasing greenhouse emission by 20% – emission of carbon dioxide should be limited by at least 20% as compared with the level as of 1990 or – if conditions are favourable – even by 30%; moreover, the share of renewable power sources in the total power consumption should be increased to 20% and the power use effectiveness should be increased by 20%,

Objective 4:

increasing the education level – number of persons ending school education prematurely should be limited to 10% (compared with the current level of approx. 15%) and increase the interest of persons with university education from the current 33% to 40% (which means an increase in the number of persons with university education by 2.6 mil. people),

Objective 5:

supporting social inclusion – the number of people threatened with poverty should be decreased by 25%, i.e. by 20 mil⁷.

Objectives set out are strongly interrelated. For example, increase of the employment rate should pull limitation of poverty size among homeless and persons professionally inactive. Reaching objectives of a low-emission economy will not be possible without a relevant increase of outlays for research and development or wider use of information and telecommunication technologies.

Whereas, **the fourth objective directly refers to the education sector** and sets out specific values which will be reached at the general-European level within the upcoming decade. Such values will contribute to the implementation of the Strategy's superior objective: increasing the employment, intelligent and permanent economic growth suitable for social inclusion.

In the context of the problem discussed in this elaboration, the abovementioned first priority area, i.e. "intelligent growth", is essential. Implementation of objectives within the scope of the first priority requires "improvement of the quality of education systems, intensification of operations in respect of scientific research, support for the innovation and transfer of knowledge across the EU, full utilisation of information and communication technologies, creation of proper conditions to implement innovative ideas taking the form of new products and services; hence reaching an economic growth, creating new valuable workplaces, and reinforcing the EU capabilities to meet the global requirements. Next to the R+D operations quoted above and utilisation of information and communication technologies, the third fundamental area where it is required to undertake actions is education. The problem is connected with absence of fundamental skills among pupils and their too early resign from further education. Moreover, education obtained numerously does not correspond to the market's requirements⁸.

The European Commission, moreover, elaborated seven initiatives, including "**Youth on the move**" which refers to improvement of outcomes and increase of attractiveness of European universities, as well as facilitating young people to enter the labour market and supporting entrepreneurship of young and educated specialists⁹. "The initiative anticipates the support of mobility and academic cooperation (e.g. within the scope of the Erasmus programme). Also,

the university education should be modernised using, for this purpose, solutions implemented around the world, where also mechanisms of recognising non-formal qualifications should be developed. Also reinforcement of actions aiming at facilitating entering of the young to the labour market is anticipated¹⁰.

3. Factors of local development and an entrepreneurial university

Fulfilment of civilisation- and culture-related challenges, both global and local, depend highly on the quality of education. Modern education thinking should take place in two dimensions, should be set out with two new categories – in the global sphere and the local scale, and oriented at formation of an entrepreneurial university.

An entrepreneurial university, providing measurable outcomes for both the scientific and business environment, should be tightly connected with the closest and further surrounding, hence “melted into the local society through scientist’s participation in clubs, associations, local initiatives. The entrepreneurial university is a university education institution operating in many areas, constantly searching for new opportunities, flexible, adjusting to the changing market conditions, needs, and new challenges¹¹, holding not only resilient contacts with the surrounding (impacting its development) but also entering the task of **creation** of the surrounding into its mission, recognising here the needs of the economy based on knowledge. The entrepreneurial university is an institution caring not only about its internal development and education level of students, but also provides the self-government authorities and business environment with innovative solutions in various disciplines of life at the local and regional scale.

Development of entrepreneurship and variable types of development initiatives connected with university education, therefore, are closely bonded with the general local and regional development. The subject literature enumerates a series of factors and institutions impacting the local and regional development in a larger or smaller scale. One may distinguish i.e. a division into **exogenous and endogenous determiners**. Specification of the role of exogenous and endogenous factors in the local development “bears the meaning exceeding the solely scientific inquiries as it may constitute an essential directive in the practical management of local development¹².

Among internal factors, local possibilities and local development needs are protruded to the foreground. The local possibilities shall be interpreted as local resources of variable type: human, property, raw materials, where their significance for the local development should be perceived in the scope of development, quality, accessibility, and effectiveness of its use, as

well as adequacy for the general development strategy. Whereas, development needs shall be interpreted as a willingness to guarantee a specific level of human life or relevant pace of its growth. Further to the development of education at the local level the most important endogenous factors include local possibilities and local educational needs (Figure 1).

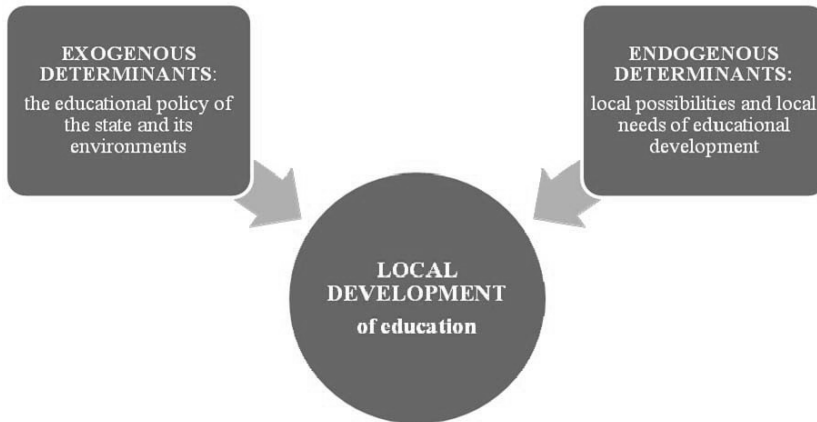


Fig. 1. Factors of local development in relation to education

Source: Own elaboration based on: Gralak (2006); Hryniewicz (2000).

External factors include, on the other hand, the economic policy of the state and its entire surrounding (also spatial policy). In the education sector the most important exogenous factor of local development is the educational policy of the state (Figure 1).

Hereby, the main effort has been made to define the term of “**local development**”, because in polish aspect of economy it has not long-standing tradition and “it does not have well established theory and methodology, neither significant literary and pragmatic output”¹³.

There is no easy way to establish boundaries between regional and local development in the context of globalization. It shall be stressed out that within one country there are two, “separated development processes. Differences in local and regional dimensions are based mostly on degree of development’s complexity and the potential value of synergy effect, perceived by the local community”¹⁴. Having in mind that territorial district in the administrative division are very often described as regions and micro-regions, therefore both these names: regional and local activities can be found in economy as well as in science, and the local ones are generally called micro-regional. Simultaneously, what we have here is a significant diversity in distribution of resources and economic activities as well as important differences between standards and development’s dynamics of regions and micro-regions. These differences are the reason for

pro-development activities of citizens and local authorities. The regional and local authorities usually tries to promote better social and working conditions and to improve determinants of regional and micro-regional development. The local development is often interpreted as a process of the important changes within municipalities or districts (micro-regions), so within local community and territory system. This system is characterized by “special attributes of area, economy and culture as well as local preferences of needs and hierarchy of values”¹⁵. There are many multidirectional interactions in a micro-region that make difficult to define the term of local development. To simplify, the assumption has been made that local development includes basic activities of micro-region such as local community, economy and ecosystem. However one of the most important effect of local development is a creation of new values on the micro-regional level, among others: establishing new enterprises, creating new jobs and producing new goods and services fulfilling local and supralocal demand¹⁶. In that place of our deliberation, very important question comes out: if the actions taken by authorities and local communities, such as creating new university’s specializations can be counted as effect of local development?

Another important aspect of local development is **entrepreneurship and innovation of people** being part of a specific local society, residing a specific city. We often are witnessing passiveness of people towards events taking place in the nearest surrounding. This passiveness often stems from the belief that a unit cannot change much. However, if the individual entrepreneurship, creativeness, and innovativeness are supported by local (or regional) institutions and authorities, then there is a chance to launch relevant mechanisms supporting the unit’s entrepreneurship. “The local and regional policy plays a huge role if local authorities are able to understand their ancillary role, i.e. inspiring and supportive (e.g. through investments in the infrastructure). Financial institutions and supporting institutions may play an important role but only when they operate flexibly and very quickly”¹⁷.

In the scale of professional education, both at the high school and university level, a crucial role is played by the cooperation of education institutions with the economic environment, including in majority the sector of small and medium sized enterprises which are usually strongly connected with the local society and impact the economic development of the region or micro-region.

Conclusions

Quoting the words of Z. Bauman: We are thrown to the mid sea without maps or a compass; the buoys sank or are not visible – we have only two options: endeavour the breathtaking views of new discoveries ahead of us or tremble with fear of drowning¹⁸. If we treat the globalisation process as navigating across the sea – where the map and compass is identified as adoption of an active position in the formation of local development – we do not have to tremble with fear, as quoted by Bauman. Moreover, by leaving the education system at a high level, open to the world and to requirements dictated by the globalisation process, by stopping in safe ports (treated as the stages of social and economic development) we obtain a sound control taking the form of utilisation of local and regional development factors (as plans and strategies formed by societies and local authorities, and regional institutions). It is certain that every “port” should characterise with formation of conditions allowing to satisfy the fundamental requirements, the implementation of which approximates individual state education systems to the requirements of informative and knowledge-based society, opening the education systems to the environment and the world at the same time acknowledging local and regional needs.

In the end it should be emphasised that more and more often, at all levels of development discussed in this elaboration, one may come across the strive for the construction of direct and intense bonds between the university education and its surrounding, especially including the labour-based environment. What is characteristic for this type of actions is creation or cessation of entrepreneurship of universities themselves and entrepreneurship behaviours of students, graduates, or educational and/or scientific employees. Feedback between the global and local (also regional) development best reflects itself in the compatibility of employers’ expectations towards the university graduate’s profile. A feature most highly regarded by employers in university graduates is entrepreneurship which, according to P. Drucker denotes: *the readiness and capability to undertake and creatively and innovatively solve any new problems, skills in utilising the opportunities and chances taking places for a flexible adjustment to the changing conditions*¹⁹. Contemporary modifications require to perceive entrepreneurship of university graduates – hence, potential employees – not only in relations with the entrepreneur and entrepreneurship, but rather as a specifically required feature creating an opportunity to reach a professional success.

Notes

- ¹ Pomieciński (2011).
- ² <http://www.forumakad.pl/archiwum/98/10/artykuly/10-studia.htm18626> (access date: 16.06.2011).
- ³ Kwiek (2011).
- ⁴ Ibidem.
- ⁵ http://ec.europa.eu/eu2020/pdf/1_PL_ACT_part1_v1.pdf (access date: 18.06.2011).
- ⁶ *EUROPA 2020, Eine Strategie für intelligentes, nachhaltiges und integratives Wachstum*, Europäische Kommission, KOM (2010) 2020, Brüssel 03.03.2010, p. 3.
- ⁷ *Strategia na rzecz inteligentnego i zrównoważonego rozwoju sprzyjającego włączeniu społecznemu* [Strategy on behalf of intelligent and sustainable development favorable for social inclusion], http://www.mg.gov.pl/files/upload/8418/EUROPA_PL.pdf (access date: 23.06.2011).
- ⁸ *Europa 2020 – Innowacyjność jednym z kluczowych zagadnień strategii gospodarczej UE* [Europe 2020 – Innovation being one of the key topics for the EU economic strategy], www.pi.gov.pl (access date: 21.05.2011).
- ⁹ *EUROPA 2020* (2010), p. 14.
- ¹⁰ *Strategia na rzecz inteligentnego* (2011).
- ¹¹ *Uczelnia IV generacji* (2011).
- ¹² Gorzelak (2000), p. 99.
- ¹³ Filipiak, Kogut, Szewczuk, Ziolo (2005), p. 23.
- ¹⁴ Ibidem, p. 30.
- ¹⁵ Ibidem, p. 19.
- ¹⁶ Ibidem, pp. 19–20.
- ¹⁷ *Uczelnia IV generacji* (2011).
- ¹⁸ Bauman (2000), p. 101.
- ¹⁹ Drucker (1992), p. 34–35.

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