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Transformation of the Academic Culture of European University in the Context of the Risk Society

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Transformation of the Academic Culture of European University in the Context of the Risk Society

Transformacja kultury akademickiej uniwersytetu europejskiego w kontekście społeczeństwa ryzyka

Introduction

The reforms taking place over the last fifteen years in the European higher education within the Bologna process have made a profound impact in most countries of the so called Bologna club. They are related to major aspects of higher education. The evidence of the essential nature of the educational reforms is the transformation of the academic culture that has been developed in European universities for many centuries. The changes associated with the era of modernization risks are the subject of our analysis.

The objective of the article is to analyze the transformation of the academic culture of European university in the context of the risk society. The key notions of our research are a *risk society* and an *academic culture*.

Determination of the risk society impact on the development of academic culture involves consideration of the leading characteristics of this society. In Western sociology the most popular theories of risk society were created by European social philosophers A. Giddens and U. Beck. According to A. Giddens, a risk society is “a society increasingly preoccupied with the future (and also with safety), which generates the notion of risk” (Giddens 1999, 3). U. Beck defines the notion of risk society as “a systematic way of dealing with hazards and insecurities induced and introduced by modernization itself” (Beck 1992, 21).

U. Beck argues that risk is not an exceptional case, not a “consequence” and not a “byproduct” of social life. Risks are constantly produced by society, and this is a legitimate production, carried out in all spheres of society – economic, political, social. Risks are inevitable products of the machine which is called decision making.

In our investigation we deal with risks and threats induced and introduced on academic culture by large-scale educational reforms that have been called Bologna process. In the context of our investigation we define the Bologna process as a complex multifaceted set of reformation processes in higher education taking place at the supranational, national and institutional levels in the 47 countries of the Bologna region. In the process of the reforms the Bologna member states formed a new geo-educational space – the European Higher Education Area (EHEA).

We consider the academic culture as one of the manifestations of organizational culture, which is interpreted in the organizational theory as the organization's vision, values, norms, systems, symbols, language, assumptions, beliefs, and habits. D. Ravasi and M. Schultz state, that organizational culture is a set of shared mental assumptions that guide interpretation and action in organizations by defining appropriate behavior for various situations (D. Ravasi and M. Schultz 2006).

Taking into account the above mentioned definitions of organizational culture, we define the academic culture as the system of professional skills, behaviour foundations, basic values and principles which are shared by all members of the academic community. It's not only teaching culture, but it reflects all the aspects of the mission of modern university: educational, research and social.

Culture Changing and Culture Destroying Effects of Bologna Reforms

first of all we'd like to mention, that the life of university community in modern Ukraine is sharply divided into two realities: before the war conflict and during the war conflict. Thus, our opinions about the risks are divided into two parts. The first one concerns the risks for the academic culture in the conditions of peacetime, and the second one will focus on the new realities of the military period of our life.

At the beginning of our reflections we will focus on the peacetime risks. Namely on the influence of such risky enterprise as large-scale educational reforms on academic culture.

During the last decade the subject of our research comprises Bologna process. We concluded that the changes introduced by this process have multidimensional and multilevel character (Сбруева А. 2013, 236–261). In Ukraine as in other members of the Bologna club, reforms have led to the structural

transformations of educational cycles, transition from national to the European academic degrees, reorganization of educational process, modernization of approaches to education management, implementation of external quality assurance, etc. These changes have taken place at the higher education institution level, national educational systems, and the supranational European level (Сбруева А. 2011, 252–257).

The research of the processes mentioned above is meaningful to all educational stakeholders: from parliament members, ministers and university managers, to scientists, teachers and students. The changes introduced by reforms are related to the purposes, content, methods of our professional activities; they change our lives and consequently us. While researching the educational reforms we pay much attention to finding out the features of the academic culture transformation.

The analysis of theoretical findings in the field of political science, jurisprudence, sociology of education, economy of education, management theory, comparative higher education allows to conclude that in the process of Bologna reforms there occur intrinsic transformations of the academic culture. They lead to its transition into an essentially new condition. We consider globalization (namely its economic and political aspects), internationalization and knowledge economy to be the main determinants of this radical change.

In this context it's worthwhile mentioning first of all the **structural reforms** which have led to the universalization (Europeanization) of the structure of academic degrees by introducing degrees of bachelor and master. In many European countries, a 3-year period of bachelor studies has rather controversial consequences. We are reluctant to evaluate these consequences only negatively. To the positive structural changes we refer:

- **first**, democratization of higher education. Providing a wider range of society layers with an opportunity to receive a degree due to reduction of terms of studies.
- **second**, giving a more flexible approach to higher education and every consumer of educational services to meet the requirements of a labour market;
- **third**, unification of small-scale higher education systems of the European countries for the purpose of obtaining an educational result that is comparable within the European Higher Education Area (EHEA).

To **negative consequences** of the structural reforms, which constitute an essential danger to the traditional culture of European university, researchers include the following ones:

- **first**, a transition from a classical research university, that is aimed at fundamental education and forming an encyclopedically-minded, critically thinking, creative and high-moral person, to an entrepreneurial university, a «factory of knowledge», which treats a person as a productive functional element that has a standard set of professional competences to meet the needs of the labour market (M. Pekkola, 2009). The university professors are sorry to admit that there is a total submission of university activities to the requirements of economic competitiveness of the state (S. Garben (2011), H. Pechar (2012) etc.).
- **second**, in the context of modern reforms not only external control over university activities is being introduced but a strategic manipulation of the youth identity formation process, that is a basic component of its formation and socialization. Students are induced to interiorize *professional growth values* as their *personal moral values*. They are accustomed to think, feel and act according to the logics dictated by requirements of the economy (M. Pekkola (2009); J. Biggs, C. Tang (2011));
- **third**, there is a decrease in quality of student contingent: that is a transition from students that are academically prepared and aimed at active creative learning, self-education and high achievements to diversified student contingent that entered universities as a result of massification of higher education and, actually, is focused on receiving only basic higher education, that is a Bachelor's Degree (A. McCoshan, J. Witte, Westerheijden D. (2010)).

We can speak about many other risky aspects of Bologna reforms that have some culture changing effect or even a culture destructive one. The most obvious examples of such reforms are the following:

- working-out of national and European *qualifications frameworks* (QFs), adapted to the requirements of the regional labour market. In the pre-Bologna period the QFs, arranged as a standard set of professional competences that defined the results of the received education, did not exist in any European system of higher education. The introduction of QFs that is carried out in a detailed way, leads to standardization of curricula, and therefore, to the essential decrease in the level of autonomy in education content definition (Westerheijden 2010);
- introduction of the European Credit-Transfer System (ECTS) which allows curricula to have a flexible student-centered character. It is a question of basic transformation of organizational foundations of educational process, and transition from a process-centered paradigm of higher edu-

- cation to a result-centered one where the number of received credits and the quality of acquired professional competences are the key focus;
- introduction of external mechanisms of quality assurance (QA). European universities traditionally had only internal mechanisms of quality assurance that was guaranteed, first of all, by high quality of the faculty and student contingent, as well as high level of financial support from the government. In conditions of mass higher education and its transformation into a powerful factor of development of the national states' economy and European region economy on the whole, the external tools of quality assurance are becoming more and more significant. In the context of our research we ascertain the transition from an internal (academic) culture to an external (market and consumer) culture of university responsibility and reporting. The "top-down" tendencies of university responsibility is gaining more power; i.e. their activities are controlled by national state or independent supervising institutions and supranational (pan-European and subregional) QA-structures (especially ENQA). A positive feature in the given context could be a great attention given to the development of internal culture of quality assurance in universities in the process of reforms. To a certain degree such approach counterbalances and supplements the introduced mechanisms of external quality assurance. However, the internal control, that is being developed in modern conditions, is not purely academic, it can be defined, in our opinion, as an administrative-academic one since it is carried out by university chairs, as well as administrative structures;
 - development of academic and professional mobility. In times of Bologna reforms considerable quantitative growth of student mobility has occurred: vertical mobility has increased by 74%, while the total quantity of students in EHEA has risen by 33% (McCoshan et al. 2010). Comprehension of the cultural changes connected with the development of academic and professional mobility, which is an important component of internationalization of the European educational area, proves their controversial inconsistent character. On the one hand, internationalization is the true European university tradition: science and education never knew limits and borders. Besides, in modern conditions higher education internationalization is enhanced by powerful information and technological support, as well as processes of political, economic, financial and cultural integration of the European region. However, there is another side of the medal – internationalization contributes to the transformation of EHEA into the means of global competitive struggle aimed

at obtaining commercial benefit from training foreign students, teachers, scientists and managers from other regions. Such tendency is caused by the domination of market education policy principles in the world on the whole and in Bologna region in particular. According to that dominance there is a commercialization and commodification of higher education, transformation of university from an academic into an entrepreneurial organization. We can find the confirmation of this view in numerous works of European researchers that analyze the realities and prospects of higher education from the standpoint of the logic of the various social sciences: sociology, political science, law, philosophy of education, comparative education and etc. In particular, an expert in European law S. Garben says that the Bologna process is not so much the Europeanization of higher education, as its economization, which is associated with the Anglo-Saxon model of higher education that extends in the context of modern reforms across the continent (Garben, S. 2011).

We agree with the Norwegian researcher G. Karlsen, who connects the creation of the European Higher Education Area, which is a priority of the Bologna process, with the development of the European Free Trade Area, a European “internal market”. In this context the logic of support of academic mobility as the mobility of human capital, which is a necessary means of improving the competitiveness of the European economy in the era of the knowledge economy construction becomes clear. Norwegian professor sums up, that under such conditions the personality development (*Bildung*) is not a value in itself, it becomes a tool of economic policy (Karlsen, G. 2005).

Thus, we may analyze many other risky aspects of Bologna reforms. The essence of risks of introducing these innovations are modernization of the academic culture on the model of industrial enterprise. In this context significant changes occur in all aspects of academic culture (educational, research, social) and not for the better.

The Wartime Risks and Threats to Academic Culture of Ukrainian Universities and the Ways to Overcome them

Today we think it more important to talk about the risks of wartime that endanger the academic culture of Ukrainian universities.

Nowadays the community of our university re-evaluates the risks. We believe that the greatest value today acquire personal risks of the members of

university community. In this context we speak about the danger of physical extermination, moral devastation, civic apathy and pessimism, dejection, unemployment, poverty professional frustration. To our great regret personal dimension of risk quickly transforms into community dimension: the above mentioned risks affect the quality of the educational activities, the quality of teacher and student contingents.

We consider that the most effective way to overcome the majority of the named risks and to build a new type of academic culture according to democratic tendencies of our social life is community integration, development of civic activity of its members by means of self-organization.

We consider our university as a humanitarian institution that carries out an important social mission in the region. Therefore, today we have a chance to prove that we are worthy of this mission.

Since the first days of real threat to our country, the activities to support the Ukrainian army, national guards, and Sumy regional battalion of territorial defense were arranged at the university. We granted the militaries of Sumy artillery regiment with clothes and different kinds of equipment which they needed badly. It's not a secret that Ukrainian army has been actually destroyed by the previous political regime. Today it is the People's Army in the true sense of the word, and we – the university community – identify ourselves as the part of the people that maintains and supports the army.

In August, before the beginning of 2013/2014 academic year, we initiated a complex program in support of the Army aimed at development of civic activities of university community, its mobilization in resistance to real threat to the country, the university, and each citizen. We believe it is important to develop university identity in the representatives of our community. The perception of the university, which carries out an active social mission in the region, as a center of citizenship fostering, must be formed. Besides, one of the important tasks for us is development of charity culture.

The ways of implementation of the program are the following: 1) charitable actions on raising funds and material resources for soldiers and the wounded, 2) university patriotic and moral-aesthetic extracurricular activities, 3) various kinds of volunteering.

We are developing personalized charitable support. Thus, our philanthropic help goes to:

1. the Sumy battalion of territorial defense, that is dislocated now in a very dangerous spot in Donetsk region on the border with Russia;

2. individual military man, relatives (parents, children, brothers) of our teachers and students, who are serving in the army now and also need help;
3. our fellow countrymen who were wounded in the combat and need financial support for physical rehabilitation;
4. relatives of the dead militaries who work or study at the university.

In the modern conditions there is a steady expansion of the circle of people, who need our help.

Our program comprises initiatives at several levels. They are all-university, separate structural divisions (departments and institutes), chairs / boards, initiative groups, individuals. We also provide informative and organizational support to our volunteers participating in city and national events.

We consider blood donation for the wounded on the battle fields in the south-east of the country the all-university initiative. Both students and faculty of the university take part in this initiative. Every Saturday the representatives of a certain structural division (department, institute) go to the regional blood transfusion medical center and donate blood for military hospitals.

Organization of charitable fairs are considered to be the initiatives of structural divisions. All the money raised during such events is spent on the things vitally important for our soldiers.

As a rule our charitable fairs become a part of more large-scale events that are related to professional activity of this or that structural division of the university. In this context the possibility to demonstrate professional skills of our athletes, musicians, singers, artists, fashion designers, poets, masters of applied art is important. This is the way they show their support of the country and appreciation of the heroic deeds of our army, fellow countrymen who defend our lives. Charitable fairs awaken the hidden talents of our students, as they are motivated to present handmade items. Professional holidays, organized by our structural divisions, promote development of professional abilities and aesthetic tastes of students and teachers; contribute the formation of their identity as members of the university community.

Services of practical psychologists who provide consultation for various groups of population of the city are the initiatives of chairs / boards. In terms of implementation of our program the scope of their activities has been considerably extended. They have been provided with additional rooms for consulting refugees who have psychological problems on these hard days.

The initiatives can have either long-term (blood donation, consultations for various groups of population, etc.) or short-term (charitable fairs, profes-

sional holidays, etc.) character. We point out that the university initiatives are a component of a wider range of civic activities arranged in the city, region, and country.

Estimating the influence of our activities on transformation of the academic culture, we are not inclined to exaggerate it. Firstly, culture is a phenomenon connected with traditions, which cannot be exposed to fast changes, especially its values. Secondly, we realize that our academic community is not homogeneous. Not all teachers and students have civic courage to open, public demonstration of activity, and initiative. A part of the community is independently and not publicly engaged in charity, preferring not to speak loudly about it and, moreover, to be an example to follow. Another part of the community consciously, though silently, is reluctant to help the Motherland and even keep the pro-Russian moods. Having analyzed who these people are, we classified them as follows:

1. political opponents of new Ukrainian power; communists and activists of the previous political regime (Party of Regions);
2. orthodox conformists, supporting the idea of the united Russia, the Russian world;
3. people whose dominant interests are economic while moral, spiritual values are not typical to them at all: they do not care what country it is, they are only concerned about their work and money paid for it;
4. pacifists opposing any wars, and consequently, army support;
5. some ethnic Russians, whose social contacts in Russia. They see themselves as representatives of Russian people, disadvantaged by the Ukrainian state;
6. elderly people who have lost their career and the possibility of personal realization after the collapse of the USSR, and continue to relate themselves with the Soviet Union, in favour of its recovery.

Taking into account a wide variety of our community members' opinions, we believe it's necessary to find such forms of activity which are acceptable to everyone, and help to find common, but not different, advance unity, and thus help to overcome the risks and dangers.

An important part of our work is the implementation of the research tasks, such as analysis of the level of civic engagement of community members, attitudes toward participation in community initiatives, degree of individual risk perception.

We conducted a questionnaire and asked the members of our community (namely: bachelor, master and doctoral students, teachers and administrators)

about their attitude to the implementation of the program in support of the Army at the University and their perception of the wartime risks.

Table 1. Questionnaire Conducted Among Members of the University Community

1.	<p>Do you think it is important to take part in the events to support of the Ukrainian army?</p> <p>A) Yes, I take an active part in such events, as it is my civic duty (65%);</p> <p>B) I take part in such events as I feel compassion to militaries who suffer from poor maintenance of the army in the area of ATO (20%);</p> <p>C) I help Ukrainian army by paying taxes, so I do not think I have to participate in any events like that (5%);</p> <p>D) I condemn the war in the East, so I do not think it necessary to help the army (5%);</p> <p>E) I do not take part in such events as I have got a very tight budget (5%).</p>
2.	<p>What is your personal attitude to organizing of charity events at the university to support the Ukrainian army?</p> <p>A) positive, such events are vital to preserve the integrity of the state (65%);</p> <p>B) such events are possible, but they should not interfere with the educational process (25%);</p> <p>C) negative, as it is a matter of conscience of every citizen, but not the scope of responsibility of the institution (10%).</p>
3.	<p>What kinds of threats exist for you personally in the conditions of an escalated military-political situation in Ukraine today?</p> <p>A) physical destruction in combat (55%),</p> <p>B) depression (20%),</p> <p>C) poverty (40%),</p> <p>D) unemployment (40%).</p>

As it is seen from Table 1, the majority of the community members answer that they take an active part in such events, as it is their civic duty (65% of the respondents). They approve the program in support of the Army at the University because such events are vital to preserve the integrity of the state (65% of the respondents).

All the members of university community perceive personal risks. So we hope that our actions will help it to survive in difficult times, to preserve and develop positive personal qualities. We hope it will influence positively our academic culture, at least our understanding of the social mission of the university.

Conclusions

In conclusion we would like to emphasize that the nature of the Bologna reforms and their culture changing and culture destructive effect are caused largely by the fact that the mechanisms of their development and implementation have administrative and bureaucratic character: modernization of the European higher education systems is carried out not as the initiative of the academic community, but as the political will of the national states and supranational structures. This significantly affects both the content of the reforms themselves and relation of the academic community to their implementation.

However, as any large-scale reform, Bologna process has its pros and cons that are closely connected, and even at the same time can have both positive and negative connotations, depending on the subject of the analysis. In table 2 we compare the positive and negative impact of the Bologna reforms on academic culture of the European university.

Table 2. Positive and Negative Aspects of the Impact of the Bologna Reforms on the Academic Culture of the European University

Dimensions of academic culture	Positive aspects	Negative aspects
Educational dimension	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • introduction of ECTS as a means of transparency in obtaining and transfer of educational credits; • introduction of external mechanisms of quality assurance at national and supranational levels; • implementation of national and European <i>qualifications frameworks</i> (QFs), adapted to the requirements of the regional labour markets; • development of academic student mobility (horizontal 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • decrease of higher education quality as a result of diversification of student contingents and massification of higher education; • introduction of short academic cycles that leads to new educational paradigm and means transition from fundamental education, forming an encyclopedically-minded critically thinking person with highly developed cognitive skills, to professional training of specialists with a standard set of professional competences to meet the needs of the labour market

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> and vertical) and professional teachers and researchers mobility; • implementation of student-centered learning, innovative teaching methodologies; • internationalization of the higher education content 	
Research dimension	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • strengthening linkages between university research and economic needs of the European nation-states and the region as a whole 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reducing of basic research funding, preference for narrowly pragmatic applied research to obtain immediate economic benefits
Social dimension	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • democratization of higher education due to providing a wider range of society layers with an opportunity to receive higher education; • diversification of higher education institutions, personalization of educational services; • development of the system of life-long education, allowing to receive higher education during the lifetime 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • decrease of higher education quality due to its democratization and massification; • failure to fulfill social obligations of governments to ensure the right of every citizen to quality higher education in connection with the neoliberal ideology of educational reforms and the global economic crisis

The Bologna process has entered its second phase of development that will run until 2020, so the analysis of the reforms remains challenging. As the academic community is experiencing some frustration because of the culture destroying effect of changes, lack of their efficiency, we consider the broad debate on the prospects for the development of the European Higher Education to be relevant. Moreover, it should involve all stakeholders, including students.

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SUMMARY

The article deals with the analysis of processes of transformation of the European University academic culture in the context of the risk society. The nature of such concepts as risk society and academic culture is determined. Based on the theoretical analysis of a wide range of sources in the field of educational policy, sociology of education, educational law, comparative pedagogics, factors and forms of culture changing and culture destructive impacts of the Bologna reforms on European University academic culture are defined. Effects of wartime conditions on the transformation of the values of the Ukrainian university academic community are characterized. The conclusions concerning the positive and negative aspects of the transformation of various aspects of academic culture (education, research, social) in the context of massive reformation processes are made.

KEY WORDS: positive and negative aspects of the transformation, academic culture, education, research, social, reformation processes.

STRESZCZENIE

W artykule dokonano analizy procesów transformacji kultury akademickiej uniwersytetu europejskiego w warunkach społeczeństwa ryzyka. Scharakteryzowano znaczenie pojęć społeczeństwa ryzyka i kultury akademickiej. Na podstawie analizy teoretycznej szerokiego wachlarza źródeł z zakresu polityki edukacji, socjologii edukacji, prawodawstwa edukacji, pedagogiki porównawczej szkoły wyższej, naświetlono czynniki i przejawy wpływów kulturowozmiennych i kulturowoniszczących reform bolońskich na kulturę akademicką uniwersytetu europejskiego. Określono wpływy czasu wojennego na transformację wartości społeczności akademickiej uniwersytetu ukraińskiego. Wywnioskowano pozytywne i negatywne aspekty transformacji różnych składników kultury akademickiej, to jest: edukacyjnego, badawczego, socjalnego – w warunkach szeroko zakrojonych procesów reformacyjnych.

SŁOWA KLUCZOWE: pozytywne i negatywne aspekty transformacji, składniki kultury akademickiej, edukacja, badania, socjal, procesy reformacyjne.