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Comparative Education and the World Crisis in Education

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Comparative Method in Education.

A clearly seen tendency to internationalization and globalization of the modern world is reflected in the current developments of social sciences which strengthen the emphasis on cross-cultural, interdisciplinary and comparative approaches. Comparative analysis in education proved to be a useful tool in the science of education from a number of standpoints.

It provides us with knowledge and information on other countries' educational systems, practices and outputs. Historically, this function of comparative education can be traced back into Antiquity when descriptions of other nations' lifestyles including their educational practices appeared in the writings of Herodotus, Xenophon, and Plato.¹ Observations of other cultures, with more or less exposure to their educational practices were made during the Middle Ages and in the New Times. Ibn-Halid (1332-1406) is qualified by Brickman «as an early researcher in comparative education»², while Erasmus (1466-1536) and Comenius (1592-1670) contributed to the development of the field by postulating an ideal «to establish common culture throughout Europe»³ (Erasmus) and by an attempt to establish an international center for the study of education⁴ (Comenius). After publication of Jullien's «L'Esquisse et vues préliminaires d'un ouvrage sur l'éducation comparée» in 1817, which was characterized by «objective observation, the collection of documents, thoroughness, and systematic analysis»⁵ comparative education appeared to be developing as a science. Collection of data on educational systems in different regions has been rapidly growing since the 19th century, ending with contemporary projects funded by UNESCO, OECD, United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA).

Describing «comparative argument» and «cultural borrowing» as misconceived comparative education, Holmes stated that it is dangerous to use comparative argument, that educational comparisons might «divert attention away from a serious analysis of national problems and careful consideration of alternative solutions.»⁶ He also pointed out, that «Comparative educationists should... ask themselves, in spite of its long history, whether selective cultural borrowing is theoretically justified and practically feasible.»⁷

On the contrary, expressing the opinion of the Board on International Comparative Studies in Education, Bradburn and Gilford argued: «In any enterprise as diverse as education, there are practices and policies that deserve to be chronicled, not just on the grounds of their perceived utility, but on the grounds that they exist: for example, the number of languages taught in the classroom, the prevalence of pen and ink, the memorization of sacred texts, the use of Mark Twain as literature. It cannot easily be said that having information on these issues in different countries is likely to improve the practice of U. S. education, but it is worth knowing what exists in the

world and, if the practices die out, what did exist but did not survive. Such knowledge may help educators avoid reinventing a faulty wheel.»⁸

As all of the social phenomena, educational and cultural borrowing, including that at the international and cross-cultural levels, has its advantages and disadvantages. On the one hand, it is true that «borrowing», particularly its duplicative version, may not be fit into the «living spirit» and the «national character» of the imitator. On the other hand, it is not obvious that educational ideas, models and institutions, developed in the country of origin, are necessarily better than those, borrowed from other countries. Moreover, «homemade» experiments might be more destructive to the «national character and living spirit» of the nation than external borrowings, especially in the case with totalitarian systems.⁹

It is also true, that when educational borrowings were forced into application, they provoked negative effects on the «national character» and the living conditions of people in recipient's country. Thus, British colonial policy promoted nationalism and eliticism in the colonial territories, while «the schools in Nigeria, the Indian subcontinent, the nations which formed Malaysia, or indeed the islands of the British West Indies failed to instil a permanent national self-consciousness which would ensure the persistence after independence of national goals which could unite people living in a sovereign territory, speaking different languages, with different religious beliefs and different communal and kinship relationship».¹⁰ Educational and cultural institutions artificially established by colonialists were designed «to form a class of persons who would be “Indians in blood and colour” but “English in tastes and opinions, in morals and in intellect”»¹¹ and «to educate the African away from his culture».¹² The activities of educational advisors in the Third World countries often turns into a more or less sophisticated version of modern neocolonialism.¹³

The emulation of advanced countries' experience can be educationally unsuccessful. Some authors find connections between the untimely and rapid establishment of universal primary education in Japan, Sri Lanka, Kenya and «examination hell» in Japan as well as «diploma disease» in Sri Lanka and Kenya.¹⁴ A modern communicative approach in teaching English as foreign language, offered by American, British and Australian experts, did not succeed in China.¹⁵ In other countries, the introduction of universal primary education showed up the decline in enrollments and poor quality of teaching.¹⁶

In some cases, universal literacy campaigns, which were modeled on more or less extent Soviet experiments, caused undesirable social changes in the countries they were implemented. For example, the rapid expansion of educational systems in developing countries in the 1970s and the 1980s resulted in the growth of unemployment and forced migration from rural to urban areas. In the 1960s to the 1980s, educational policies in developing countries mostly copied Western (occasionally Soviet) models. Summing up the effects of educational changes on social and political developments in these countries, Llamas pointed out the factors as follows :«(a) underemployment of higher-educated workers ; (b) employers' upgrading of the educational requirements for workers at all levels of job entry, reinforced by the decline in educational standards ; (c) a dissatisfaction in a great majority of the population, who are unable to find the route to upward mobility ; and (d) political institutions that are losing legitimacy as a consequence of the worsen-

ing of these unsolved economic and social problems.»¹⁷

Emphasizing the incompatibility of national systems of education, Holmes stated, that «Comparative Education studies should be undertaken on the theoretical assumption that national and cultural differences are too great for cross national transfers to succeed in the sense that related outcomes in the donor society will be replicated in the host society if an institution is "borrowed".»¹⁸

Nevertheless, the history of education shows us that educational and cultural borrowings, either planned or spontaneous, to a more or less extent occur frequently. At the end of the XXth century "the borrowing tendency" is increasing. Contemporary comparativists see «The wealth of data, information, and knowledge that has accumulated on most of the nations of the world has stimulated a new era of cross-national borrowing.»¹⁹ Borrowing seems to be unavoidable. Moreover, the dichotomy - borrowing or non-borrowing does not exist. Borrowing is not a mistake by itself, but mistakenly borrowed patterns may cause some negative outcomes. The problem is not whether to borrow or not, but the problem is what to borrow, how to change the donor's original models and to adjust them to the «national character» of the host country.

Let us look up briefly at the history of educational borrowings in Japan, Russia and the USA, the countries we focus on in this article.

Japan showed one of the first examples of educational borrowing in world practice. During 6-9 A. D. it adopted intensively the elements of Chinese culture, religion (confucianism), writing system and educational tradition. It is indisputably proved, that «in the early eighth century, Japan first tried an examination system modeled after the keju system.»²⁰ *Keju* was the Chinese examination system, the first of its kind in the world. Based on *keju*, the Japanese established their own examination system called *kōkyō*.

Later on, starting from the second half of the XIXth century (Meiji period), the Japanese government reoriented its policy to the comprehensive restructuring of the educational system based on leading Western patterns. The new model of education emulated the French school system, the development of universities was inspired by the German model, pre-school education was influenced by the English system, while primary and professional education used American pedagogical theories and practices. Those educational borrowings were successfully adjusted to the «living spirit» of the Japanese nation. By the year 1910, 100% of Japanese children attended primary school. Japanese universities and colleges gave education to high quality engineers, agricultural specialists, and military officers. Japan became the first industrialized country in Asia. It defeated the Russians in 1904-1905 Russo-Japanese war, and it was the only one country ever to attack the USA on its sovereign territory in 1941. After World War II, the Japanese educational system was reformed in accordance with the recommendations of American experts and Occupational Authorities. Now, Japanese school system and university structure are similar to the American model, although it is questionable to what extent the content of courses (curriculum) and the inner life of Japanese educational institutions correspond to American education. By all means, Japanese students outachieved American students in international evaluations of achievements tests and Japanese education is considered to be the best in Asia, serving as a model

for many Asian countries. Japanese experience proves that cross-national transfers can succeed in the host country and they can produce high-level outcomes which are even more impressive than in the donor's society.

Historically, building up of Russian educational system followed European educational models. During the reforms of Peter the Great, special missions were sent to Europe to learn European science and education. Many prominent Western scholars were invited to Russia. Russian Academy of Sciences and Moscow State University were founded in the XVIIIth century under the influence of German academic traditions. The Gymnasium and Lyceum structure in pre-revolutionary Russia's school system emulated similar institutions in Germany and France. Those "borrowings" substantially contributed to the development of Russian education, science, arts and culture so that by the end of the XIXth century they have become internationally recognized.

After the breakdown of the "iron curtain" which covered Russia for more than 70 years, Russian education restored some of its pre-revolutionary practices (Gymnasiums, Lyceums) on the one hand, and on the other hand, extensive collaboration with American and West European educational institutions started at the same time. As a result, post-Soviet university education is now changing towards the West European model, business education is oriented primarily to American practices, while school education was completely diversified. It absorbed private schools, Waldorf schools, religious education, special schools, testing systems and other ideas borrowed from American-European samples. All these changes stimulated new developments in Russian education which play an important role in post-perestroika Russia.

In the XVII-XIXth centuries, American education was mostly modeled on European patterns. According to the American Constitution, education is a state function, that is why one can find there a plenty of elements partly borrowed from different European countries. In the 1950s and 1960s Americans learned thoroughly the Soviet system of education being impressed with the launch of sputnik, in the 1970s and 1980s their focus transferred to the study of Japanese education.

Because of the extreme diversity of American education, which is now undergoing a reform phase, it is difficult to trace any definite borrowings from either Soviet or Japanese education but undoubtedly, American educators take into account the experiences of both countries while looking for improvements and further developments in their educational system.

As we have seen, educational borrowings can play and have actually played a positive role in the development of the recipient's country. It also seems that internationalization and globalization of the postmodern world, which leads to the formation of the so called "global village", will end the discussion about borrowing. The world can not borrow from itself.

Besides its knowledge-informative function and borrowing outcomes, comparative education makes a certain contribution to the development of educational theory. It does not make a lot of sense to always conduct an analysis of education in a single country. Such analysis would be incomplete and irrelevant. Indeed, «Countless statistics can be amassed on education in particular country, but unless they are incorporated within a comparative framework, the analysis will be limited.»²¹ Comparison gives us ideas about other nations' achievements in world education and it

helps us to place one's country in accordance with international standards. A comparative perspective broadens our understanding of one country's national system of education. For example, a Russian scholar doing research on American education will bring some new data into academic circulation in his country. This data will be of interest to comparativists, as well as to scholars in educational planning, educational administration, educational policy, pedagogics and other related fields. Thus, comparative educational research will add to our knowledge about the functioning of education in general, while the Russian academic community will enrich itself with a deeper understanding of those elements of the Russian educational system which correspond to American ones being investigated in this research.

The science of education can not develop effectively without having comparative education as its substantial part. Some scholars recognize the lack of a general theory of education. They argue «that comparative education is indispensable to the development of a theory of education that will be able to transcend the limitations of current theories that are derived from specific times and places.»²²

It was probably impossible or even undesirable to set up a general theory of education at the time of "national educational systems". What is considered to be "educational" in one country may be treated as "anti-educational" in another country. For example, such aspects of Japanese education as memorization, "examination hell", lack of creative thinking, social selection function are described as anti-educational by some authors,²³ while these features constitute the essence of Japanese education which worked successfully during the XXth century. Soviet educational authorities rejected the test system which is a major component of evaluation in Japan and the USA. Despite this fact, the educational level achieved in the USSR was quite compatible with those in Japan and in the USA, if not better in some areas.

An Increasing Role of Comparative Education in the Modern World

Nowadays, a tendency to internationalization of what once was called "national systems of education" places comparative studies in the forefront of the development of general education as a science. The scientific, cultural and political roles of comparative education in contemporary society are increasing because of several factors. It becomes a valuable source for educational planning, educational policy designing and implementation involving decision-making process.

Educational issues make a significant part of national and international policies especially in the end of this century. They are among the hot issues on the political agenda of the USA for 2 decades. George Bush and Bill Clinton pretend to be named "educational" presidents. The Labour Party in Great Britain which came to power in 1997 devoted a principal part of its election campaign and post-election activities to educational reform in this country. Russia and Japan declared educational changes among priorities of their national policies.

Education is multifunctional. From a political point of view the important functions of education are: formation of a "collective mentality" - which suits state demands - and the socialization of individuals. The signs of a new geopolitical division of the world appeared after the end of the Cold War. Due to internationalization, globalization and informatization of the modern world, the

formation of "collective mentalities" tends to overstep the borders of national states. Historically developed certain isolation of national educational systems retard the further progress of national and world economies. Despite its natural origin, educational diversity may play a negative role in today's world by setting up additional barriers to international communication. As carriers of certain types of paradigms and values shaped within different educational backgrounds, economic and political actors, as well as common people, face difficulties in understanding each other and in finding consensus, on the one hand, while big businesses, politics, and labor resources need some common educational and cultural background in order to operate successfully in the postmodern "global village" on the other hand.

After World War II, the USA made a quite efficacious attempt to provide the rest of the world with commonly shared values and lifestyle. American culture (or subculture) has been widely spread in Europe, Japan, South-East Asia, and post-Soviet Russia. Americans used different methods, including educational intervention, to promote "Americanization" of the world. Cultural and educational exchange programs brought thousands of Japanese educators to the USA in the late 40-s and in the 50-s. After the collapse of the USSR and the Warsaw Treaty, special educational programs, financed partly or in whole by the US Government, were established to support the transition to democracy and free market economy in those regions. The educational policies of the Peace Corps, USAID, and the World Bank may be seen as a part of American neoglobalistic strategy.

From this point of view, American comparative education, which has excellent academic credentials, contributed to the formation of US foreign policy by providing data and analysis on education in non-American countries. Policy-makers used this information for the benefit of American foreign policy.

It is worthwhile noting that another superpower, the USSR, underestimated the importance of comparative education for its international and domestic policies. Only a few studies were conducted on Western education and those that were published usually contained critical observations from "the struggle between classes" standpoint in favor of Soviet educational model which was proclaimed to be the best in the world. Those studies were marked with the lack of objective data collection and any kind of serious analysis of education in the "capitalist world". The Third World countries located in the hemisphere of the Soviet interests were supposed to emulate Soviet education in order to advance to socialism. Probably, the disparagement of educational developments in the West and the undervaluation of comparative education as a source and method of foreign policy were among many other reasons which predetermined the failure of Soviet policy in the Cold War confrontation with the USA.

Nowadays, the situation with comparative studies on education in post-Soviet Russia is changing to the better. Many books and numerous articles have been published in this field.²⁴ Russian scholars got a chance to conduct free discussions with foreign colleagues at international conferences and symposiums. Comparative education is seen as one of the sources for reforms and innovations in post-Soviet Russia.

Data obtained from comparative studies in education serves as an in-depth analysis tool for

specific issues in educational policy-making. These studies range from comprehensive projects initiated by UNESCO, OECD, the World Bank, and the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA) to issue-centered studies in the areas of special concern.²⁵ As a result of comparative data analysis, educational authorities are making some changes and adjustments in educational policy.

For example, in the second part of the 1980s, evaluation of international experience in the length of schooling made by Russian scholars resulted in the introduction of a 5-day school week instead of a 6-day school week, and in exercising a transition to 11 years of school education starting from the age of 6 years that was aimed to replace the 10 years schooling system. Further reforms in the Russian educational system included such internationally recognized practices as diversification of educational institutions, introduction of multiple choice standardized tests, etc.

During the last decades, educational authorities in the USA were aware of the international evaluation of American students achievements. IEA data showed significant underachievement of American high school students in mathematics and science compared to other nations. Taking this fact into consideration, the American government recently stated that «By the year 2000, United States students will be first in the world in mathematics and science achievement.»²⁶ The advancement of math and science at high school level is one of the priorities of current educational policy in the USA.

After it became known that American students spend less time at school and do less homework than students in other developed countries, «Many states have passed legislation encouraging or requiring school districts ... to lengthen the educational day or year, and to assign more homework.»²⁷

At the same time, the Japanese government was criticized for the massive pressure which it puts on the students in terms of the length of schooling, cruel examination procedures and extreme intensification of studying in general. Responding to the critique and taking into account the solutions of these problems in other nations, the Central Council for Education, an advisory board to the Japanese Minister of Education, Science, Sports and Culture «...recommends that all school weeks become five-day weeks for all elementary and secondary schools by the beginning of the 21st century.»²⁸ The Council is also promising to continue deliberating the problem of excessive entrance examinations.²⁹ Among other examples of the influence of comparative data analysis on Japanese education, one can point out a move towards deregulation, internationalization and an emphasis on creative thinking development in contemporary Japanese education.

Thus, comparative analysis of educational developments in different countries leads to education reform initiation. While observations of other countries achievements and improvements in education is not the only one reason (in many cases it is also not a major reason) for starting educational reforms, comparative data provides reformers with valuable information on critical analysis of past and current approaches to educational reform, common problems in education and the ways of their solution, «“frames of reference” within which to specify appropriate reform policies»,³⁰ borrowing or avoiding,³¹ prediction. During the process of educational reform, comparative studies help to measure the progress and to monitor the success, as well as to evaluate

national achievements.³² In ideal form, comparative education should not be only a temporary expedient for union between educators and policy-makers, but it might serve as a thorough basis for scientifically planned reforms in education that was suggested by Holmes.³³

Because of its specific methodological approaches and international character, comparative education overcomes the limits of education only studies. It was noticed, that the "fathers" of comparative education, Marc-Antoine Jullien and Michael Sadler «believed that the comparativist had to take into account factors beyond schooling in order to understand education.»³⁴ Both nomothetic and ideographic methods used by those scholars were intended to figure out the factors lying in the social environment which could explain the current state of education and the scenario of its likely changes. Post World War II trends in the development of comparative education as a science were associated with new ideas and projects brought by internationally experienced soldiers who came back to their home countries, and by international volunteers, such as the Peace Corps staff. Those people were more interested in «understanding the role of education in shaping social structures and influencing economic development»³⁵, than in schooling or education itself. They promoted a refocus of comparative education to broad social science generalizations filled with international context.

The growing significance of comparative education is related to the internationalization of education. Contemporary education is being extensively and intensively internationalized. This process of internationalization reflected in the increasing numbers of international students studying abroad and international studies programs, in expanding university and academic exchanges between countries. There is also a tendency to mutual recognition of diplomas, certificates, degrees and other academic credentials issued by educational institutions in different countries. In its turn, comparative education is expected to provide the necessary data and analysis for the promotion of international education.

The results of comparative education research are vital for supporting the activities of UNESCO, OECD, the World Bank and other international organizations which set up a kind of international educational network and make certain efforts to coordinate the development of education internationally.

Finally, comparative education is one of the first (if not the first) branches of education science which is supposed to solve universal problems challenging the world's educational institutions. These challenges range from such issues as methods of financial support, "reform of selection examinations and standardized testing... what subject matter is essential and what is not ; how to get good teaching to be well paid..."³⁶ to dichotomic pairs of concepts, for instance : centralization v. decentralization, public v. private education, autonomy v. accountability, equality v. quality,³⁷ internationalization vs. localization, unity vs. diversity.³⁸

Taking into account the above mentioned issues together with other crucial points facing the world's social systems in general, and educational systems in particular, comparative studies are in position to deal with global problems which constitute the so called "world crisis in education".

The World Crisis in Education

The first symptoms of a world crisis in education were indicated in the late 1960s. The world educational crisis was then described as «The consequent disparity - taking many forms - between educational systems and their environments...». ³⁹ It was argued «that educators could not be expected by themselves to set right everything that was out of joint in their educational systems, because the crisis encompassed the whole of society and the economy, not education alone» ⁴⁰ thus, the educational crisis was presented as a part of a worldwide social, political and economic crisis.

Educational reforms in the 1960s and the 1970s, which were aimed at overcoming certain contradictions between education and society did not succeed completely. Moreover, the world crisis *in* education was deepened with the world crisis *of* education. «Not only has the crisis been intensified by growing maladjustments between education systems and the rapidly changing world all around them, but it has also acquired new dimensions in the 1970s and early 1980s. Of these new dimensions, the most significant is that *there is now a crisis of confidence in education itself*», ⁴¹ as stated by Philip Coombs in his book «The World Crisis in Education», 1985. Accordingly, education reforms of the late 1970s and 1980s were designed to make significant changes in the educational systems themselves. Many countries worked out statewide programs of educational reforms.

In the 1980s and the 1990s the American government issued a series of reports and legislation - «A Nation at Risk. The Imperative for Educational Reform», 1983 ; «National Education Goals», 1989 ; «America 2000 : An Education Strategy», 1991 ; «Goals 2000 : Educate America Act», 1994 - which formed a basis for current education reform.

The Supreme Soviet of the USSR adopted a law on «Reform of the General School and the System of Vocational-Technical Education», 1984. Changing the direction of reforms in post-Soviet Russia, the State Duma adopted a new «Law on Education» in 1992, later being revised in 1996, while in 1994 the Russian government launched the «Federal Program of the Development of Education in Russia.»

In Japan, starting from 1984, the National Council on Educational Reform issued a series of reports containing recommendations for nationwide reform in school and higher education. The reform movement in Japan was intensified in the second half of the 90s, when the Central Council for Education proposed «The Model for Japanese Education in the Perspective of the 21st Century», 1996 and the Ministry of Education, Science, Sports and Culture announced the «Program for Educational Reform» in 1997.

In Russia and in the USA the educational crisis was taken so seriously that it was regarded as a threat to national security. ⁴² Nevertheless, the response to the challenges posed by a rapidly changing world on the one hand, and collapsing education on the other hand, was generally ineffective. Various attempts to reform or to renew the existing systems ended in failure. One by-product of these reforms is a deeper understanding of the essence of the educational crisis.

Within the last two decades, the developed countries entered the phase of postindustrial socie-

ty which nowadays appears as the information society. Actually, that was a huge change from one type of civilization to another. However, the systems of education did not follow in accord with this transformation.

The postindustrial model of education which corresponds to the level achieved by modern societies is usually described as a «learning society» and «lifelong education». The face of such a «learning society» is not seen clearly. In the «Report to UNESCO of the International Commission on Education for the Twenty-first Century» the main feature of a new society is defined as «educational continuum, coextensive with life and widened to take in the whole of society, that the Commission has chosen to refer to in this report as “learning throughout life”⁴³. Four basic types of learning and foundations of education are : learning to live together, learning to know, learning to do and learning to be. Those types of learning are provided by a lifelong multidimensional system of education.⁴⁴ For Coombs, the system of education evolving in the modern world is a combination of formal, non-formal and informal education in a supposedly lifelong process of “learning network”.⁴⁵

Another vision of modern (or postmodern) society represents a more radical approach. In his recently published book entitled «To Renew America», the Speaker of the US Congress Newt Gingrich sets up education against learning. According to Gingrich, «Education describes a system of teachers and students that has grown inefficient and expensive. Learning describes a dynamic community of people using whatever means they have to improve their performances and better their lives.»⁴⁶ Gingrich gives a title «Learning Versus Education» to a special chapter of his book. He proposes to «begin creating a Third Wave Information Age learning system» characterized by the distinctions between the Second and the Third Wave Information Age education as follows :

1. Lifetime learning versus a segmented system
2. Learner-focused versus teacher-focused education
3. Achievement versus process as a measure of success
4. Society-oriented approach versus isolated system
5. Technology-embracing versus technology-averse learning⁴⁷

From this point of view there is no need to undertake any reforms in education. The existing system of education should be abandoned and replaced with lifelong learning. Gingrich's model of “learning society” requires more emphasis on self-education and self-learning to be added. Besides all, this replacement means that government will loose its control over the process of converting adolescents from human being to the citizens of the state.

A warning on the crisis in modern education comes from holistic movement. Scholars who share holistic paradigm observe the content of the present days education as unsuitable for people. One of the leaders of the holistic movement, Prof. Douglas Sloan remarks that, «Reductionist and fragmenting ways of knowing, truncated conceptions and, hence, impoverished experiences of reality, the failure to nourish and, therefore, the atrophy of qualitative sensitivities in art, in statecraft, and in science, all bespeak a momentous educational failure. The crisis is educational furthermore, simply because it puts the children and the future of their earth at stake.»⁴⁸ In this

discourse, the current humanistic paradigm which is characterized as rational and empirical should be changed to a new holistic paradigm that is ecological and spiritual. Representatives of holism are sceptical about a possibility to reorganize the existing educational institutions: «rather than *restructure* our schools – that is, to try yet again to design a better institutional form for established assumptions – we need now to *deconstruct* the socially / culturally produced meanings of “education”, “school”, and “teaching”.»⁴⁹

The most comprehensive critique of traditional types of education and learning may be found in the writings of “deschoolers”. The deschooling movement is an intellectual trend emerged in the 1970s. Deschoolers, headed by Ivan Illich, accused educational establishments and attacked their theoretical foundations. They suggested abolition of obligatory schooling, disestablishment of schools and legal protection from the imposition of any obligatory graded curriculum.⁵⁰ If in the 1970s, Illich had criticized formal schooling, then in the 1990s he started to question the legitimacy of education itself. «If people, he wrote, are seriously to think about deschooling their lives, and not just escape from the corrosive effects of compulsory schooling, they could do no better than to develop the habit of setting a mental question mark beside all discourse on young people’s “educational needs” or “learning needs,” or about their need for a “preparation for life”.»⁵¹

As we can see, the concepts concerned with the future of education in postindustrial societies put a strong emphasis on learning instead of education. Traditional formal types of education are being widely criticized. Radical critics of education pose education versus learning and learning versus teaching. In some extreme critical versions (Illich) even learning as a value is discredited. A gap between education and society is increasing. «All over the world, education systems are being asked to do more and do it better»,⁵² reported UNESCO’s International Commission on Education for the Twenty-first Century. People’s dissatisfaction with the current state of education is growing, while educational reforms do not bring any stable results. All these trends allow us to suggest that the world educational crisis shows up as the *alienation of education*.

The alienation of education is manifested in 4 main modes. They are: the alienation of education from nature, the alienation of education from society, the alienation of education from person, and the alienation of education from itself.

The alienation of education from nature. This type of alienation is old rather than new. It derived from the separation of learning process – that was mostly concentrated in a classroom – from natural life. As far back as 1839, the American writer Ralph Waldo Emerson wrote: «We are shut up in schools and college recitation rooms for ten or fifteen years, and come out at last with a bellyful of words and do not know a thing. We cannot use our hands, or our legs, or our eyes, or our arms. We do not know an edible root in the woods. We cannot tell our course by the stars, nor the hour of the day by the sun.»⁵³ Indeed, artificially constructed knowledge (scientific paradigm) is transmitted to students placed in artificial setting (classroom) by using artificial teaching tools (lesson, seminar, lecture) – that is, artificial preparation for life in artificially constructed world. In the second half of the XXth century this type of alienation was combined with realization that knowledge obtained in the educational institutions can be destructive to nature. Therefore education, either consciously or unconsciously contributes to the development of a

world ecological crisis. From the holistic point of view, formal education is also responsible for three dangers: « (1) that formal education will cause students to worry about how to make a living before they know who they are; (2) that it will render them narrow technicians; and (3) that it will deaden their sense of wonder for the created world.»⁵⁴

The alienation of education from society is viewed in a variety of forms. First, it is an alienation of education from labor in terms of time and place. Formal schooling does not have direct connections with labor. The idea of a polytechnic school, proclaimed in the socialist countries, was not actualized. In general, recent school and university graduates cannot work without retraining or special in-service training. Second, education divides the labor itself into mental and manual labor. Marxist critics of the “capitalist” school point out that the school’s main purpose is «not to “qualify” manual and mental labor in different ways but far more to disqualify manual labor (to subjugate it) by only qualifying mental labor.»⁵⁵ This function of the contemporary (not only the “capitalist”) school is well represented in Japan where social selection is acted out at school and university levels and manifests itself as “examination hell”. The division of education in Soviet Russia into complete secondary education (polnoe srednee obrzovanie) and incomplete secondary education (nepolnoe srednee obrazovanie) plus excessive competition for university entrance exams was designed to pursue the same goal. Third, education is no longer correlated with contemporary requirements for the labor force and social-industrial expectations.⁵⁶ «The relevance of the education systems, both formal and non-formal, built up in the course of time is being challenged and their ability to adapt is being questioned. Despite the spectacular development of school enrollments, education systems seem to suffer from an inherent lack of flexibility and they are at the mercy of the slightest forecasting error, especially when it comes to training people in the skills of the future»⁵⁷, reported the International Commission on Education for the Twenty-first Century. Fourth, there is a certain isolation of education from morality and social ideology. School is no longer an authority in setting up moral principles. It is either loosing its influence on the students in terms of introducing moral values, or even allows equivocal changes in the curriculum, such as dubious issues on sex education in American and European schools,⁵⁸ and “moral education” in Japan. Juvenile crime rates are steadily growing.⁵⁹ Teenagers turn to prostitution, gambling, alcohol and drug abuse. Family values and the school curriculum (as well as school life) are no longer in harmony with each other. Parents are excluded from the educational process.⁶⁰ The “achievement ideology” which was associated with success at school and further success in life is in a deep crisis as more and more university graduates become jobless or forced to enter blue-color jobs, especially in the USA.⁶¹ Hence, education makes another alienation, i. e., alienation within the mental labor.

The alienation of education from person is expressed in a growing distance between in-school life and outside school life. As it is stated by Shapiro, «School itself often appears to represent the antithesis of genuine human activity. The experiences of the classroom are almost always vicarious, symbolic, and abstract - “make believe” activities in a “make believe” world. Indeed, despite the recent popularity of correspondence theories in which home, school, and work are viewed as providing an essentially unified or corresponding set of experiences, for many, if not most,

students, the experience of school is one of massive discontinuities. It is pervaded by the feeling of its unrelatedness to the life of the individual.»⁶² The educational system is more interested in a mass production of grades and graduates than in student's personality. Gifted individuals are not produced by the system, they «merely have survived it.»⁶³ In some cases, contradiction between a person and the system leads to exclusion problem as it is recognized by the International Commission on Education for the Twenty-first Century : «Formal education systems are often rightly accused of stunting personal fulfillment by forcing all children into the same cultural and intellectual mould, without taking sufficient account of the variety of individual talents. They tend to emphasize, for example, the development of abstract knowledge to the detriment of other qualities such as imagination, the ability to communicate, leadership, a sense of beauty or the spiritual dimension of existence, or manual skills. Depending on their aptitudes and natural inclinations, which are different from the moment they are born, children do not therefore benefit in exactly the same way from the educational resources of the community. They may even be left stranded if the school is not suited to their talents and ambitions.»⁶⁴ Personal alienation in school is also expressed in forms of alienation of students from each other (violence, guns, bullying) and the alienation of students from their teachers (in the USA 52,000 teachers are assaulted annually.⁶⁵

The alienation of education from itself may be observed in many dimensions of which, the most important are : a) The alienation of education from learning. The learning process is no longer ultimately associated with education. Some critics of contemporary education view it in opposition to learning (Gingrich, Illich). b) The erosion of educational paradigm. Modern science describes the world in terminology of probability which makes the content of curriculum somehow uncertain. Based on humanistic values and, to a great extent, on rationalistic-mechanistic worldview, educational paradigm cannot follow the recent trends and discoveries in fundamental sciences, social sciences and the humanities. That causes either miseducation or substantially lowers the quality and relevance of knowledge transmitted via institutions of formal education, especially at school level. c) The qualitative and quantitative ineffectiveness of education. The quality of education becomes lower while its costs are becoming higher. There are 900 million illiterate adults, 130 million children are not enrolled in school, more than 100 million children drop out prematurely from school.⁶⁶ This statistics show us that on the one hand, contemporary education does not fulfill its main function - to educate people - and, on the other hand, there is a tendency to a growing ignorance of the existing educational system. Functional illiteracy, deskilling of both teachers and students, widespread cramming - all these phenomena confirm the pathological ineffectiveness of the world's education. d) The formalization of education. Standardized tests and scores in graduation certificates become a major criteria of student's achievement evaluations. Dogmatization of knowledge, which is almost unavoidable in the systems of formal schooling, leads to questionable emphasis on memorization and preparation for tests and exams instead of preparation for real life. e) The marketization and corporatization of education. Privatization of education at all levels is the most obvious sign of marketization. Education is treated as a commodity, which might be priced and then sold. Students and their parents are playing the role of customers and / or investors on the arena of the educational market. In its turn, corporations try to

establish (or to expand, in some countries) a certain control over education in terms of making profit by managing / selling educational services and raising demands on educational outcomes in public education. Recently organized campaigns against the current state of the education systems in Japan and in the USA were to a great extent inspired by corporations unsatisfied with the knowledge and skills of both university and school graduates. In the USA, «new type of corporate involvement extends far beyond the traditional contribution to vocational programs, into such areas as curriculum development and financial management.»⁶⁷ f) The crisis in educational thought, characterized by a number of “antieducational” theories which, in their reflections, deny and / or discredit the essence of education. In these versions of educational thought, educational theory alienates from its subject. Besides the above mentioned deschoolers, there are also opposite trends in educational thought which appeal to the introduction of penitential conditions in schools⁶⁸ and to the enforcement of mass exclusions from universities.⁶⁹

The alienation of education is only one side of a very complex phenomenon which is called education. The tendency to alienation, described above, is neither absolute nor fatal. To understand the directions in which contemporary education is going, to know the ways how to improve it - more research should be done on comparative analysis of education in various countries.

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