

Chapter 1

HIGHER EDUCATION AND THE REFORM PROCESS

THE NEW PARADIGM OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN THE KNOWLEDGE SOCIETY

Abstract

The Bologna Process brings major changes in European higher education, regarding the philosophy of education and scientific research, the mission of universities in the Knowledge Society, the structure and objectives of academic studies. It is the reform of the very concept of education, a new paradigm of academic education and scientific research. It includes such elements as: emphasis from teaching to learning, student-centred education, creativity and innovation, education focused on outcomes, system of transferable credits, easily readable and comparable degrees, mobility for students and didactic staff, quality assurance, European dimensions in higher education, the internalization and globalisation of education, new approaches as inter- and transdisciplinarity, education as a free experience of mind, open access, inclusive and responsive universities, diversity, multiculturalism etc. By some of its most significant elements, the new paradigm expresses the tendency of returning to

the classic university model, of recovering, in essential data, the “old” philosophy, rather than a radical dissociation of it. The Bologna reform is built, in its main elements, on the Bologna University and some other famous Europe’s universities classic models. It is not a separation, but the valorization of the European academic tradition. It is also a symbolic appeal of the European Union to its roots in a glorious academic past, with powerful and living models, while facing the challenging future.

Key words: paradigm, Knowledge Society, reform, institutional mission, open access, innovation, creativity.

The current changes and developments at European and global level aspire to reshape the world in the spirit of globalisation. The New Europe, whose core is formed by the European Union, is facing an unprecedented challenge today: *competition*, in all areas and at all levels, with the world powers, but also with emerging countries, especially in Asia, which come with a great human and economic potential. Education plays a vital role in this fierce competition, since education is the basis of knowledge. A simple truth, known since ancient times, and available more than ever today, knowledge is power. Any area of economy and every sector of public and private life is powered by human intelligence, enriched by knowledge power. The leaders in the areas of education, knowledge and research have a fundamental role to play on the contemporary world scene. Starting from these simple, but extremely challenging, premises, the EU leaders concluded that, in order to be globally competitive, Europe must build a

knowledge-based society and economy. The university has the fundamental contribution in this genesis, as an elite institution of education, research, training and development. The current era, a time of rapid developments and changes, requires new forms and educational models. The Bologna Reform has proposed a major change in the design, structure and content of university education, towards certain finality: creating the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) and of the European Research Area (ERA), forming together the European Knowledge Area (EKA), the space of the knowledge-based society and economy.

University and the Building of Europe

By its genesis, the university is a European institution. The first universities in the world, in the full meaning of the term "university", developed during a brilliant academic tradition, were born in Europe: Bologna (1088), Oxford (1167), Paris (1170), Vicenza (1204), Palencia (1208), Cambridge (1209), Arezzo (1215), Padua (1222), etc. If the university is the creation of Europe, Europe as a space of civilization, culture, spiritual and material values is, in turn, the creation of the university, as the elite institution of education. Along with the political and religious power, the university has always played, especially in Western Europe, a key role. European universities have become prestigious schools of knowledge and education in fundamental

areas, real power centers of science. The whole development of Europe over the centuries to modern and postmodern era is closely linked to universities and their mission. In today's times, in the context of globalisation, the mission of university is again an essential one. Globalisation means fierce competition in the economic and financial areas, but also in knowledge. At the same time, knowledge represents the very purpose of two fundamental processes for the personal and social development: education and scientific research. University is the laboratory in which education and research must be developed to the highest standards of performance and competitiveness. Europe is aware that, in order to participate in the global competition, to remain what it was, the cradle of civilization and the vanguard of the progress of humanity, it must become a global force in knowledge. Medieval and modern Europe was built by the force of knowledge that the great politicians, scientists and artists have acquired in universities. By *university*, they came into *universality*. The new Europe is being built today, in an unprecedented planetary competition, on the university foundation. To meet the challenges of the time, to answer the requirements of the today's world, Europe needs a modern university, an institution that would foster education and research in the service of knowledge at the highest global standards. The European University of the 3rd millennium is the product of a process of profound reform, built on a new educational philosophy and on the reformation of the very concept of education. The process is meant to determine the transformation of the current university, to redefine its mission, structure and content in the knowledge society and to reshape the European higher education whole system. The new metamorphosis is a work of great difficulty, since the battle is on the institutional level, but also psychological, an unprecedented challenge to the higher education. It is a battle with tradition, a

glorious academic tradition, with established mentalities strongly linked to a consecrated model, associated with excellence and the prestige of knowledge. The process has started for more than a decade. It is interesting to see how the new university will be and what remains available of the old model of classical university and of its education paradigm. Are we witnessing the separation from a prestigious model which built Europe of knowledge, civilization, culture, science and arts or, on the contrary, the return to the classical paradigm of academic education and the recovery of a philosophy that seemed buried in the ashes of history?

The Classical University Model

To understand the evolution of the university in time up to the shaping of the contemporary model, we must have an essential picture of the initial model. Knowing it in its fundamental dimensions, we will better understand the metamorphosis of the today's university into the tomorrow's university by the higher education reforming process that participates in the building of the New Europe.

The first three universities in Europe and worldwide, since the university was born on the old continent, are Bologna, Paris and Oxford. They are the universities of "first generation" and form two academic models. The Bologna model - "universitas magistrorum et scholarium" – promoted the university made up by students, in which they were favored: students chose their own teachers and the rector out of themselves too, they exercised control over teachers in teaching and payment issues. Out of the "Bologna model", the "Paris model", "universitas magistrorum", was born: a university of teachers, divided into

several faculties, in which students would have the status of university members only. On the ground of the Paris University philosophy, Oxford and Cambridge universities were founded. In fact, this is the model which formed the foundation of European universities over the years until today.

The second generation university is called "universitas ex privilegio ". Some universities have been established by royal decree, by the decision of a local authority or other official act of government: Salamanca, Naples, Toulouse, Prague, Vienna, Heidelberg, Cologne. Universities in Spain and Portugal were established by royal prerogatives and have been linked to a cathedral or other religious authority, supported by their city. Thus the universities of Huesca, Zaragoza, Alcala, Coimbra, Lisbon, or the University of Salamanca, called "mother of liberal arts and of all virtues, were founded by the monarch.

In the universities of Europe, the study, conferences, debates were in Latin, and not in local languages. In all universities the same subjects were studied, the four traditional branches of knowledge: philosophy, theology, law, medicine and also the liberal arts ("artes liberales"). The titles obtained from one of them were recognized in all European universities. Such recognition made it possible for students from any country in Europe to study in any university. Those who obtained a Ph.D. or "licentia ubique docendi" had the right to teach at any university. In the fifteenth century, the structuring in faculties of the universities, experienced the first time in Paris, has expanded in Europe. Thus, there took place the evolution from the encyclopedic model of knowledge to the specialization paradigm. The process gave birth to four specialized schools on the four key areas: medicine, theology, philosophy and law, schools known as "facultates", separated from one another. To achieve the status of "studium generale", the university was not obliged to include all four faculties. It was enough for it to have at least one of them,

along with the faculty of arts, which had a mandatory status in the university structure. The faculty of Arts was the school of the seven liberal arts, divided into "trivium" (grammar, rhetoric, logic) and "quadrivium" (arithmetic, geometry, music, astronomy), i.e. in philological, philosophical and scientific subjects.

An essential property of the classical university is *the open access* to the various branches of knowledge, practiced to meet the needs and requirements of an open society and a mobile population. The principle of open access would refer both to the students' registration and to the teachers' selection. The application of the principle, however, used to have limitations: the open access in universities regarded only men. Women have been accepted universities beginning with the nineteenth century only. Another characteristic of universities, expressing the philosophy that underpinned this institution in the medieval Europe, was *mobility*, "peregrinatio academica". Student mobility contributed to the establishment of new universities and to the making of an academic culture in Europe. The practice of mobility became a habit, a pilgrimage from one university to another, from which students got their diplomas. Both diplomas and doctorates obtained elsewhere were recognized at the university of origin. "Peregrinatio academica" was a European-wide phenomenon, involving tens of thousands of students and reached the climax in the sixteenth century. Later, with the change of the students' aims in their education process, the pilgrimage turned into an educational trip or in the "Grand Tour", which would not require long studies at any university any longer. The Grand Tour tradition has grown over time and involved universities and academies in Germany, France, Italy, Spain, England and Holland. For example, between 1500 and 1700, at least 20 000 German students studied in Italy.

It should be noted that medieval universities formed the space in which the cultural, ethical, civil values were grown, which, together with the Christian ones, established the foundation of medieval Europe and supported the European civilization to develop during ages until now.

