

SCHOOLS AND UNIVERSITIES AS SOCIAL INSTITUTIONS

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Abstract. Society is a general category, which implies the area in which people occupy space and time in a part of the universe on this planet, the Earth, i.e. all of the people who live on Earth create relationships which they establish among themselves in the process of labor and outside of it; the relationships between the people who live in a given territory, country, area; the socio-political order, the economical basis and infrastructure, all developed in a specific period of history. The main subjects and objects of a society are the people. They are also the creators of labor, of the good and beautiful. The society of people does not only create conditions but it also creates means for life. By using the physical and intellectual abilities it creates a system of productive force and a system of knowledge, different from any other being. Education is a sociological and philosophical immanence, which serves as the basis for all pedagogical principles, notions, opinions, and ideas typified and transcended in the educational area and the educational being of people. Education is a sociological, philosophical, pedagogical, and anthropological process that gives people knowledge, skills, and abilities. Education, through the systematic acquisition of scientific knowledge about nature, society and the human reasoning and it leads to acquisition of skills which develop and establish specific human traits, such as: knowledge, abilities, interests and opinions for different social and philosophical views of the world. Education as a term has many meanings. It implies an institution, a process, content and it is a result of organized or non-organized learning, for development of different cognitive abilities, and the acquisition of different knowledge, skills and habits, such as reading, writing, calculus and general knowledge about physics, the social and economic environment. Education is a part of the society or a sub-system of the global social system. Since society is part of the social system, it has all the characteristics of the global society as a whole.

Keywords: education; upbringing; society; sociology; school; university

School as a social institution

School and education are two different notions. The education and its objectives constitute the notion of school. On the other hand, school is not a constitutive element of

education. This definition of education shows that education is older than schools, and that it takes place inside and outside of the schools (Popov, 1998: 130).

From a pedagogical aspect “the school is an institutionalized form of education, and from a sociological aspect, the school is a social institution” (Ivkovic, 2003: 235).

The state and the government are the founders and organizers of the schools, as distinguished institutions for successful education. In the modern societies, schools and the educational system in general, the schools are public institutions, in which the educational and the scientific-instructional activities are carried out according to the law regulations brought by the system of the country. The educational system is the main carrier of the education, and through it, the society carries out equally the process of incorporation of the social ideals into each individual. It is a part of the society or a sub-system of the global social system. In fact, the school is a miniature society, as emphasized by John Dewey, or a social micro cosmos, as stated by Emile Durkheim.

Education and the school life are the fruit of the social life, including all social relationships that are present in a specific society. The educational system in the modern conditions is complex and dynamic, with different structural elements that constitute a teleological system. The real education should not be equaled with unspecified lessons and the acquisition of knowledge that is not applicable in real life and has no meaning and vital force. The experiences, skills and competencies are very important in the process of education, because they help the individuals to understand themselves, as stated by the great ancient philosopher Socrates *Gnothi Seauton*, as well as the social order, hence enabling them to live according to the principles of the mind and reasoning. In the process of the general education, the individuals form their social personality, becoming, above all, social beings.

The school is the first institution, in which the children spend significant amount of time outside of their family and face social responsibility. According to the sociologist Suzic, the school offers the following to the children: general and professional education, education for a specific social discipline, and socialization for adaptation in the social groups (Suzic, 2001: 213). According to the sociologist Ivkovic, the school is a sub-system of the educational system, just like education and the educational system are a dialectical part of the global social system (Ivkovic, 2003: 236).

Although, school is subject to many influences, demands and reformatory tendencies, it has been and will be the educational gathering place of the young generations, preparing them for the multi-dimensional social life. Aside for the different demands, and criticism on some occasions, the school is still an important social and pedagogical institution – a pillar of the education, in general. The schools are expected to provide an efficient and quality realization of the planned objectives and goals, set by the society, the state, the system, the environment, the parents and the children.

Reading is the fundamental process of instruction and learning, as a basic precondition for acquiring new knowledge. Reading should not remain only in the area of information, but rather it should take the form of intensive and thorough reading

and transform into research reading. Only then, we can read the subjects, people, our personality and get to know ourselves and other people. The next stage of reading is the one, in which the young generation absorbs and acquires the knowledge and results from the older generations. As stated by E. Durkheim: “The transfer of norms and moral values of the society onto the younger generation is the primary function of education” (Durkheim, 1981: 40). On the grounds of the new knowledge, other values, such as: culture, awareness, self-awareness, virtue, as main prerequisites for the younger generation to create a decent life for itself and other people, are continuously being developed.

The approach of (non)equality in the education

The matter regarding the educational potential and equality is topical and given great importance in the area of sociology of the education. According to many educational sociologists, the relationship between education and the social equality is the main topic in many sociological researches carried out mostly in the USA and Western Europe. According to the American sociologists Brookaver and Ericsson, there are two polarized approaches to education and (non)equality:

- the first that there is equality of the educational potentials and the time of education and,
- the second that the students are different, just like the people in general are different, and that these differences are genetically structured, and that the schools have an obligation to prepare the students for different social positions, on the grounds of their differences (Zhoglev, 2002: 145).

The matter of equality or non-equality of the educational potential is treated differently depending on specific historical-social periods, and mainly this matter of the educational potentials is closely connected to the global society. Usually in the previous century, the pretenders for higher social functions trained the representatives of the social elite, and other forms for stimulation of the students, such as scholarships, were given exclusively to the talented students. In this way, the complete educational system was dedicated to all the members of the society and it demonstrated righteousness and democracy because only a small number of students from the poor families who were super talented were financed, and they successfully graduated at the faculties.

The matter of equality of the educational potential is especially topical in the modern societies. Accordingly, we can conclude that: if there are great economic and other inequalities in a specific global society, and if it reproduces them, then we cannot talk about equal educational potential for the people to complete university education and thus attain higher social status, and adequate social reputation and power (Zhoglev, 2002: 146).

There are theories and different concepts for equality of the educational potential coming from different theoreticians. The definition of the notions depends on many factors, such as: the philosophical approaches and orientations, the fundamental

theoretical notions for the society and the relationships among the social sub-systems (segments), the essence of specific social institutions, as well as the theoretical – methodological approaches in the study of the society as a whole and its characteristics.

Some definitions are related to the equality in the educational potential. The starting point for the authors is that it is closely connected to the interaction of the hereditary genetic factors and the conditions of the social environment. Specific social differences that are unjust are the result from the interaction of these factors, and the individuals mainly have no influence over this phenomenon.

This is the foundation of the sociologist Rawls who states that a righteous distribution of the social wealth is impossible, if done on the grounds of the natural-hereditary traits of the individuals. He stresses that there is inequality in the distribution of the social wealth because it can be done on the grounds of the giftedness and the factors of the social environment, in which the individuals have insignificant role and influence, or none at all. Because of this, he suggests the so-called concept for redistributive justice and at the same time he makes difference between the right to and the formal equality of the educational potential. In order to create righteous equality of the educational potential, Rawls concludes that there needs to be a significant number of institutions in the society that will provide similar opportunities to the individuals in the vertical social mobility. For this reason, similar conditions for motivation of the individuals need to be provided in a society, and the adequate institutions need to provide open services and positions for everyone, exclusively on the grounds of their quality and dedication, as well as the quality realization of the tasks by the individuals. According to him, the distribution of the public and social goods can be done only by the state.

All societies, especially the modern ones, make efforts the system of education to function according to all regulations and principles, as well as inclusiveness, i.e. the equal educational potential regardless of race, ethnicity, language, culture, socioeconomic status, or religious background of the members of the society because all international conventions confirm that all individuals have the right to unobstructed access to education, which is the fundamental right of each individual in a society.

The university and the society

The university and society are essentially, dialectically and academically related. The roles and functions of the university are irreplaceable in a society, because the universities offer high scientific and research education in all of the cycles, starting from the first, through the second to the third. The first universities were organized as special communities called *Universitas*. The word ‘University’ comes from the Latin “*Universitet magistrorum et scholarium*” meaning “*A community of teachers and researchers*”.

The first university, according to relevant historical sources, was founded in Italy, more specifically the city of Bologna, long ago in the year 1088. The most important idea in the definition of the university is the notion of *academic freedom*. The first documented proof regarding this appointment comes from the organization of the

university life in the first university. The University of Bologna approved the academic declaration and called it "*Constitutio Habita*" around the year 1158 or the year 1155. It guaranteed the right of the researcher to travel and research without obstacles in the interest of education.

Today, the same principle is trending in the form of "*academic freedom*", which is widely known on an international level. On the 18th of September, 1988, 430 university rectors signed the "*Magna Charta Universitatum*" on the occasion of 900th anniversary of the foundation of the Bologna University. The number of universities who signed the "*Magna Charta Universitatum*" continues to grow, attracting universities from all over the world to join the verification and signing of this declaration¹⁾.

If the foundation and constitution of the universities is seen from the perspective of the social conditions, their primary objective was high and professional education of the members of a society, and educational professionalism in general. It is exactly this need that stimulated the founding of intellectual bodies and associations with the goal to provide permanent education and reproduction of the intellectual professions.

The universities have their own characteristics that distinguish them from other organizations and institutions. Accordingly, they can be grouped on the grounds of three types of characteristics, such as:

- Specifics distinguishing them from other institutions in the society;
- The historical specifics of the universities; and
- Specifics inside the frames of a particular type a society (Ivkovic, 2003: 243).

If we observe the specifics inside the frames of a university, then we can distinguish many of them. The most important are: the exclusiveness of the university, transfer of the scientific knowledge to the new generations of students, creating and developing new university knowledge and establishing a connection between the old knowledge and the new knowledge, and their synthesis because in science there are no old and new ideas, they are all in function of human life. The university provides prestigious social legitimacy of the graduated students by providing academic titles verified by an adequate university diploma, different high social positions for the members of a society who complete the university courses, higher position in the vertical mobility, and conclusion of the educational process, since the university courses are the last level of the educational system, the autonomy of the university being an important segment.

The autonomy of the university and the preoccupation of the professors and students are essential because the academic citizens are part of the upper layer of social stratification. When a university is founded by a founder (the state, foundations, companies, etc.), the number of faculties and their scientific areas, budget, academic character, the conditions and criteria for teachers, the instructional-scientific research work, etc., are determined. After the start of the academic work, the founder should not interfere and make choices in terms of the staff, lectures, the re-selection of the teaching staff, etc. This should be done by the university bodies on the grounds of decisions that are brought according to the legal regulations. The university decides about matters

related to finance, management, staff, pedagogy, research, the selection of students and the rules for the enrollment policy. Any kind of interference by the state bodies or the founder hurts and damages the autonomy of the university, which is guaranteed by international acts.

The university has an essential and existential function in a society. Its function can change according to the conditions and the circumstances of specific historical – social and economic – social formations. However, the two basic functions do not change. They are the scientific function and the educational function. The process that is carried out at the faculties is called instructional – scientific process. The university has functions which are constant and different from other institutions and organizations: the innovative function, the traditional function, the function of legitimization, the qualifying function and the function of social reproduction (Cifric, 1990: 101 – 105).

There are many universities in the Republic of Macedonia, both public and private. The University “Ss. Cyril and Methodius” is the oldest one, founded in the year 1949 with three faculties. Today, this University has twenty-three faculties, five scientific institutes, four public scientific institutes – accompanying members, one accompanying member – another high education institution and seven accompanying members – other organizations. Its activities are regulated by the Law for High Education and the University Statute. In the University “Ss. Cyril and Methodius”, syllabi from all scientific areas are functional – natural sciences and mathematical, technical-technological, medical and health sciences, biotechnology, social and humanistic sciences, economy and arts. The research activity is carried out at all of the faculties and scientific institutions. The following figures form the image of the university: there are more than 60.000 students from the country enrolled at the faculties that are part of the university in the first and second cycle, and more than 700 international students studying at this university. There are approximately 655 students in the third cycle of studies – the doctoral studies. A staff greater than 3100 individuals is taking part in the realization of the instructional – scientific activities of the faculties and institutions, along with specialists-collaborators and administrative staff. Until now, the University has trained approximately 150.000 staff with faculty education, more than 10.000 Masters of Science / Masters of Art and 4.000 PhDs in all instructional – scientific areas. The University “Ss. Cyril and Methodius” in Skopje holds the first place in the Republic of Macedonia according to the *Shanghairankinglist*.

The mission of the University “Ss. Cyril and Methodius” in Skopje is:

1. Cultivating the autonomy of the university, carrying out instruction, scientific and research work from all instructional – scientific areas.
2. The University is dedicated to cultivation of the international affirmation and the cultural values of the country and the members of the community as a whole.
3. The University is opened for all students on the grounds of the principle of equality and meritocracy, regardless of the ideological, political, ethnic, cultural and social background.

4. The University adjusts its academic offer according to the demands and needs of the social community, and it is in a continuous dynamic interaction with it.
5. The University creates stimulating environment for the employees, providing them with development of their abilities and skills with the goal to fulfill the mission of the University;
6. The University provides and carries out continuous and permanent education.
7. The University is dedicated to meeting the European norms and standards in all areas of action²⁾.

Conclusion

The objective of this paper is to stress the fact that the study of the educational issues and the educational system is complex and multi-dimensional, and that no science has privileges and exclusive rights for studying the education. Many sciences deal with the study of education and the educational issues, depending on their researching connotation. These scientific disciplines are directly related through the common matter dealing with education and close collaboration: pedagogy, sociology, philosophy, psychology, or as stated by Abraham Maslow "In science, we all complement each other, we need each other. We are fortunate to have different tastes in the scientific researches... The orchestra can exists although some like the violin, others like the clarinet or the drum" (Maslow, 1982: 66).

A priori by studying and researching education, the different sciences collaborate and complement each other with the goal to discover different solutions for improvement of the quality of education, as well as the direct scientific relationship between them. Primarily, this refers to the educational reforms, which are sensitive and crucial for the improvement of the quality of education. They need to be carried out in strictly determined conditions with previous all-embracing scientific, analytical-synthetic, transcendental-logical, sociological, philosophical, and pedagogical analyses based on arguments and facts. Only then, we can start their implementation. Otherwise, the consequences would be catastrophic, accompanied by educational tectonic earthquakes, expanding in all other social segments.

In order to create a modern and developed society, we need to know what education is and what its role is in the society. The great importance of the education for a society comes from the fact that it influences the overall development of a society, including the socialization of the individuals, the emancipation, the acquisition of new knowledge, skills, abilities, competencies, and the cultural capital of all individuals. Its contribution is precious and irreplaceable. The reforms that are in favor of on the improvement of the quality of the education and the overall social effect are an obligation and a need of the society. However, they must be positive, supported by arguments, providing quality and must be focused on fulfilling the highest social and human values.

The paper analyzed the complex elements of the educational system, starting from the schools, the instruction, the education, the universities, the instructional-scientific

and researching process, all with the goal to emphasize that this system is observed and scientifically elaborated through the sociological prism according to the principle *Condicio sine qua non*.

NOTES

1. The chronological data are taken from: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/University>.
2. The statistical data are taken from the web-page www.ukim.edu.mk.

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