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***THE FUTURE OF HIGHER EDUCATION AND THE SDG PROGRAM***

Throughout history, higher education has evolved in response to the perceived and changing social needs and to efforts for conserving the past. Due to these conflicting driving forces the response of higher education was always slower than the needs. In most cases their built-in inertia slowed the influence of the external environment which required response. The strength of the external factors increased substantially in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, The expansion of the mass universities, the fast increase in the number of higher education institutions, the growing number of students have been some of the main of the consequences. Three driving forces have been particularly important. One of them was based on individual needs. The university diploma became an important instrument for promoting social mobility for the lower strata of the population. The other driving force was evolving new technological era, resulting in new sectors in the production and services of the countries, the functioning of which required much more highly qualified people. The third factor has been connected with political changes, resulting changes in government policies which promoted the expansion of higher education institutions and supported the increase of participation in many countries. One may add to this an important additional factor the consequences of the decolonization process.

This stage of the 21st century which is a rare coincidence of major global changes is a major turning point in the main processes of world development. The Universities, their founders, managers, professors and

students of the 21st century must be much more future oriented, than ever before. They have to prepare their students for an increasingly complex future, and they have to educate people, who are going to play an important role in shaping the future path of the societies which will have to deal with new challenges. Every institution must have some future orientation if it wants to survive. The higher education institutions have to plan their future in a longer perspective and more comprehensive way, than most of the other social institutions. From the perspective of the students, who are entering the universities around the end of second decade of the 21st Century, the next 30-40 years may be an appropriate horizon for any foresight exercise. There are two sides for the development of a future oriented thinking: the perspectives for teaching and the perspectives for learning. Both are developing under the pressure of major transformations, which are reshaping the global system. Transformations are complex processes which include different driving forces: attempts of human society to deal with the challenges but also as spontaneous of the limited or non-existent adjustment capabilities of the old systems. Transformations are seldom pre-meditated, well designed and organized changes. The different groups of human society react to the factors which necessitate them in different ways. Studying the consequences of transformations implies the study of structures and structural changes. It is a difficult and important task also for social sciences to deal with these complex new problems.

The ongoing transformations include environmental and demographic processes, , de-ruralization, urban growth, the development of a new global power structure, A very important source of the changes is the ongoing transition to a knowledge based system. Important components of it are the radical changes in technological and production base, in the organization of

production and the markets, in entrepreneurship, in skills and employment and the international division of labor. ,resulting in major structural changes in societies and in the economy .Their cumulative, but highly diversified and unequal global consequences reshuffle the societies the hierarchies of the countries in wealth and power on the globe, which All these are bringing about qualitative changes also in the political, military, cultural and institutional dimensions of human life.

There are two dimensions of the political transformations:the international, and the internal, within the countries.As the consequence of the ongoing transformations,the international political system will be a more complex, more fragmented and chaotic and more difficult to manage. International terrorism and crime will still be a sources of dangers and risks, in spite of the different national and international efforts for their curtailment and elimination The emerging regional centres of power will increasingly challenge the hierarchies of the post-cold war era.In the absence of strong and effective global multilateral security structures, bilateralism, unilateralism and different regional arrangements will dominate international politics The number of states will be somewhat larger.Their relationships include animosity,friendship,cooperation and competitive coexistence.The quality of human resources will be an even more important area of competition.This factor increases the role and importance of higher education.The internal political trends will be influenced by religious, ethnic and racial conflicts. A crucial issue will be the future of democracy.One of the key condition of the future of higher education:academic freedom depends to a large extent on it.

**By the middle of this century the faculty and the students will be living in a more crowded world, more difficult to manage. They will have to share the shrinking resources of earth with about 10 billion „fellow citizens”. About 90 per cent of these people will live in the presently developing countries mainly in urban areas, The global employment landscape is becoming ever more complex and evolving ever more rapidly. Approximately 25,000 new workers will enter the labour market in the developing world every day until the mid-twenties, and more than 200 million people globally continue to be out of a job; yet, simultaneously, there is an expected shortage of some 50 million high-skilled job applicants over the coming decade. We also still live in a world in which there are 90 million children without access to primary school, 150 million children unable to attend secondary school and hundreds of millions of young people who cannot afford to go to university, while the world is experiencing a shortage of 4 million qualified teachers per year While the average age of the population will be higher, since the number of those over 65 will grow almost twice as fast as the global population, in the less developed part of the world there will be still many young people looking for education and jobs. It will be at the same time a better educated world, with a much larger number of people with higher and secondary education. International migration pressures and counter-measures will be much more important political, social and economic issues than today.. Demand for social services will be rather high due to aging, urbanisation and the greater participation of women in the labour force. This will certainly influence the resources, the societies will devote to education. The inter-generational distribution of social expenditures will be an important issue, a source of social conflicts in all countries.**

**Globally, the demand for higher education will remain diverse. In those countries, which want to be more welfare oriented and at the same time more competitive with deliberate efforts for the progress of the so called knowledge triangle, the acts of learning, discovering and innovating, universities will be centrally important institutions, providing high quality education, promoting research and innovation.**

**From among the close to 22 000 universities the number of those institutions which are active in all the three pillars of the knowledge triangle is the largest in the US, Canada and in some of the Western European countries. It is growing in China, India, South Korea and in some of the Latin American countries. Knowledge isn't cheap. The investments need for the development of the knowledge triangle will have to increase. In countries, where instead of developing and spreading knowledge, ignorance is increasing in decision making, universities are and will be among the greatest victims of policies.**

**Globally the higher education systems will become more diverse . The university based technology and research centers, university-industry-government research and development alliances will gain even greater importance. The university system will be more multiple. There will be over-crowded "diploma factories" particularly in developing countries, based on public sources, cheap regional institutions, specialised schools and wealthy high prestige private universities. The prestigious universities will try to increase their research income, the less distinguished will be competing for state funding. The global differences between universities in the supply of information and knowledge will be somewhat moderated by the global information networks, but they will be still quite large. The way, the universities will internationalised, will also be a factor of differentiation. In the poorer countries many local universities will be still basically poor and**

isolated from the mainstream of global science by the lack of financial and human resources. There will be however more international centers of excellence for specialized studies and research in the developing world. There will be also a greater variety of international institutions including maybe multilingual regional universities, transnational university enterprises, international distant learning networks. The academic labor market will be more globalized, with many thousands of academics crossing borders for appointments at all levels. Again, the largest flow is South-North, with North America especially benefiting from an influx of academics from many countries, The patterns of "brain drain" from the developing world may change as the consequence of the spread of higher education institutions practically in all countries of the world. Academics who leave their home countries, /many of them already maintain more contact with their countries of origin/, will have more opportunities to return or work, from abroad collaboratively with home country colleagues.

A very important trend which started already in the past century, but will certainly accelerate, has been the expansion of the virtual universities. This was facilitated on one hand by the development of information and communication technologies and on the other hand the growing needs of adult education. It is often called as distance education. Since its beginnings this system substantially expanded in many countries and became a new important trend among those, which are shaping the future of higher education. Distance education represents an area of enormous potential for higher education systems around the world struggling to meet the needs of growing and changing student

populations. The distance learning landscape has been transformed by allowing for real growth in numbers and types of providers, curriculum developers, modes of delivery and pedagogical innovations. It is extremely difficult to calculate the numbers of students engaged in distance education worldwide. The nearly 24 mega-universities boast over one million distance students, which is quite significant phenomenon. In the past centuries the system of higher education served the educational needs of youth to prepare them for a lifetime of work. Today it is clear that the future will involve a lifetime of learning in order to work.

The studying population has not only grown larger; it is becoming older, on average, and has additional obligations – mainly work and family. As a result, there is an increasing demand for a flexible learning framework, one that does not tie the learner down to a specific time or place. Differences between individuals also require an adaptable pace and mode of study, suited to personal abilities and distinct learning styles. The adult learning market is becoming increasingly competitive and full of opportunities, both for existing institutions and for new entrants.

According to an OECD data more than 40% of adults participate in formal and/or non-formal education in a given year across OECD countries. The average age of online learners is now 34, up from 27 in 2002. Distance learning is becoming a critical element of the future educational systems, equipping workers of all ages with the ever increasing range and levels of skills required to maintain competency in an increasingly sophisticated labor marketplace. Such institutions as ICTS, COURSERA, UDACITY, KHAN ACADEMY are interesting examples for distance learning which connects the higher education with the process of life long learning. They may offer a partial answer to the key

questions „where to learn” „when to learn” and „what to learn” throughout life.

How all these are related to SDG. The Millennium Development Goals have been dealing mainly with the spread of primary education. How can help the universities the achievement of SDG? First of all with the increase of skill supply. SDGs contains goals and tasks the solution of which require not only much more skilled people, but more highly skilled professionals, including the education of teachers for the education system, health professionals, etc. The role of the universities is also essential in research and innovations. These are indispensable practically in the fulfilment of all the main goals. The universities can play a key role in the increase of the cultural level of the societies. From among the goals the promotion of quality education and lifelong learning is also relevant for the future of higher education. It includes such requirements as the expanding accessibility to make quality higher education available to a much larger proportion of the population in both economically advanced and developing countries; raising completion rates of students who enroll in college; bringing down the cost of education, which is an increasing burden to students everywhere; improving relevance to eliminate the mismatch between the knowledge imparted and the skills required by the labor force to achieve full employment; enhancing quality of education; applying innovative technologies for delivering content, interaction with students, evaluation, assessment and accreditation; and reformulating the content of courses and curriculum to more effectively address social needs. All these would bring higher education in harmony with the needs and evolvign institutional conditions of lifelong learning.

**Social literacy will have to become an essential component on all level of the educational system, not only in higher education, but also in the institutions promoting life long learning in the context of SDG Social literacy implies the understanding the causes and consequences of the main external and internal processes of the society, including the sources of conflicts, the problems related to poverty and inequalities, and many other problems and solutions. This should not be considered however only as an intellectual exercise, but should help them to get read of their prejudices, illusions, agressiveness and individualism and other sources of alienation. It most be a source of social consciousness. The awareness of past experiences, a broad comprehension of the new problems, new forms of motivations, based on social ethics, commitments for social solidarity and actions, understanding the multicultural character of the world, the better knowledge about the decision structure of the planet should be important components of developing social literacy.**

