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Humanitarian Meaning of University Professional Education

Galina Petrova^{a*}, Svetlana Gural^a, Irina Brylina^b, Alla Kornienko^b, Anna Kornienko^b, Uliya Nikitina^b, Nikolay Kachalov^b

^aNational Research Tomsk State University, 36 Lenin Avenue, Tomsk, 634050, Russia

^bNational Research Tomsk Polytechnic University, 30 Lenin Avenue, Tomsk, 634050, Russia

Abstract

In the 20th century, the university faced a principally new type of cultural development and there was a necessity of transformation to get adapted to new conditions. Change of cultural epochs lead to a change in criteria and principles conditioning the university education system. Largely it affected “externally invisible and inaudible” factor, “the fluid of spiritual life” of the university, “human immaterial sub-basis” of its existence (Jaspers, 2006) - its humanitarian meaning. This can nowadays indicate that existence of the university is challenged.

The methodological basis of the research is presented by the comparative method which allows comparing scientific and humanitarian education by the criterion of correlation of professional activity in any field with a humanitarian constituent. The method of historic reenactment is also used in the article.

The problem of historical transformation of higher professional education was analyzed. Cultural-humanitarian bases in conditions of the contemporary type of cultural development in globalized world were found out. The contribution of philosophical education to the conservation of humanitarian traditions in the university was defined. The university was considered on the basis of different cultures and epochs. Special attention was paid to characteristics of contemporary culture. It can be concluded that humanitarization is one of the main criterial characteristics of the university.

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1. Introduction

University transformations which can be observed nowadays are very serious and attract research attention to the study of processes taking place in terms of its development perspectives. There is a question of the university future in the 21st century. It being transformed into an educational economical corporation or its “ruins”, “end”, “death”, etc. are considered possible ways of its future development. It should be noted that at all transformation types the university will keep its educational mission only if it initially saves one of its basic criteria – humanitarization of education. To abandon this criterial basis is equal to abandon the university.

* Corresponding author.

E-mail address: seminar_2008@mail (G. Petrova).

Currently this question is being discussed in both Russian and foreign literature. There is a doubt if the contemporary university can still connect its development (as well as in conditions of traditional, classical culture) with the humanitarian trend and development of the culture universe. Can the present-day demands for applied character of scientific research coincide with humanitarization of university education as its traditional criterion? Is humanitarization necessary at observed changes in sociocultural and epistemological recognition of the university? How is higher education and university life style changing now? What is contemporary content of the university education? All these questions have caused this article to be written.

2. Subject and methods of research

The problem of the article is connected with the research of the humanitarian character of the university education in terms of new and contemporary conditions, not always corresponding to humanitarian definitions. The research hypothesis is that the humanitarian content of university education does not refer only to the prerogative of humanities departments. It is not a parallel accompaniment, but is directly involved into higher professional education, making any professional training filled with humanitarian meaning.

In contemporary Russian and foreign literature, the problem is extensively discussed. Transformations of university criteria are considered against the background of up-to-date social and cultural transformations (Drucker, 2003; Habermas, 1994; Habermas, 2006).

Discussions are made concerning the question of the difference between the traditional classical type of university and contemporary university, which has changed its traditional criteria. There is also a question about humanitarization of university education as one of its primary criteria. Humanitarization, to be more exact, serious transformations of this university criterion are connected, first of all, with the mass nature of education, which became its characteristic feature in the 20th century. Availability of higher education for great masses is, of course, the realization of the eternal dream of the pedagogical community. At the same time, there are certain difficulties in this direction. They are connected with the fact that the mass model contradicts the autonomy of the university. It makes the university dependent on financing, decreases the level of intellectual exclusiveness and education quality. Secondly, contemporary understanding of humanitarization is based on the idea of the university professional education relevance to the employer's requirements, thus it should meet necessary demands. In this case, humanitarian constituent is connected with such personal characteristics of the university graduates which help them survive and be successful in the modern professional environment. Communicative skills, ability to work in a team, flexibility, tolerance and adaptability to changes in knowledge and professional skills refer to these characteristics. The employer pays a great attention to the ability of the graduate to risk (Beck, 2000; Giddens, 1994). Giddens (1994) classified contemporary risks which occur in connection with the arising complexity of the world and appearance of new scientific and technical programs, discoveries and developments. A person needs to learn to cope with limitless and constantly changing streams of information, with the variety of competing systems and views of life. As it becomes non-typical to work for one employer for a long time, education must prepare the future graduates for the professional career in various fields. The author supposes that in order to survive the person's needs to become more reflexive, active and responsible to his/her individual life.

Speaking about the Russian authors working in the field of university professional education, Prokhorov (2011), Shulman (2001), Kostyukevich (2001), Gudkhart (2006) and others should be mentioned. All authors emphasize that nowadays the higher education experiences great transformations in its criterial bases, humanitarian criterion being one of them.

The purpose of the article is to research possibilities to keep the humanitarian character of the university education taking into account those transformations which occur nowadays. These tasks are connected with the research attention to humanitarization of education as the criterion expressing the university principle. Higher education was established and developed as an educational institute which obligatorily included the humanitarian constituent. Nowadays, humanities have the necessity to determine the volume and content of their cognitive field. In classical epistemology, scientific cognition is determined primarily in the positivistic spirit as natural scientific. Humanitarian cognition has been long adapted to the ideals and requirements of natural scientific cognition, or referred to the field of non-scientific. Humanitarian cognition did not fit into the structure of epistemology and had two-sided consequences. On the one hand, humanitarian cognition began to be associated in epistemology with subjectivism and insufficient severity, and its results – with relativism. On the other hand, humanitarian reduction led to one-sided character of epistemological researches.

An attempt to solve the dilemma leads to another not less than ambivalent situation. If human sciences are aimed at scientific definiteness and exactness of the knowledge and it is satisfied, it becomes evident that their self-realization will become impossible at the same degree as in natural sciences. Moreover, if the natural scientific degree of "scientific objectiveness" and "exactness" is achieved in the field of humanities, such science will in fact lose its humanitarian status. Therefore, there is a question if the solution to such situation is possible.

The methodological basis of the research is presented by the comparative method which allows comparing natural scientific and humanitarian education by the criterion of correlation of professional activity with a humanitarian constituent not in one form of activity (for example, within the field of definite humanitarian science), but in the field of any professional activity. The method of historic reenactment (when certain periods defining problems of humanitarian education in the history of university education are found) is also used in the article. The humanitarian-existential approach to describing the humanitarian essence and content of the university education is also suggested and applied.

3. Results

The expected results are connected with researching the problems of historic transformation of university professional education, its cultural-humanitarian bases and positions in the conditions of the contemporary type of cultural development. University is analyzed on the backgrounds of various cultures and epochs, but great attention is paid to the characteristics of modern culture, when for the first time in history it has extricated itself from the bondage of traditions as the mechanism of development providing stability and preservation of classical content of all cultural fields and institutions, including university education. Tradition as a mechanism of socio-cultural development nowadays is behind innovations. In such conditions, values of the university, humanitarian education, all classical cultural heritage are questionable and suggested for rethinking. Vectors and reasons of such rethinking are connected with university existence in the globalized world, with the change-over of social development to the stage of “general knowledge”, with virtualization of culture, sociality and education, with the appearance of a new cultural-anthropological type of the contemporary educational subject, and with acceptance of market character of development by education and the university. In realization of the mentioned vectors of modern university development new forms of humanitarization of education as a traditional university criterion can be meant as the main ones.

3.1 *Contribution of philosophic education to conservation of university humanitarian traditions*

How could the Philosophy Department (as a historically traditional university department) be useful for finding the answer to the question about humanitarization of education nowadays? Being the knowledge about the universal ideas, philosophy unites all subjects of education, and even in this meaning it helps their communication as well as communication of the university science. Solution of the humanitarian problem of university education is that it directs at considering humanitarian education the prerogative of the Philosophic Department. The Humanitarian constituent of the educational content in contemporary university stops being considered as a humanitarian accompaniment of natural scientific education. It requires more and more humanitarian expertise in its discoveries. Expert examination can be performed practically by any specialist, if s/he possesses philosophical and humanitarian intelligence along with professional skills. Therefore, nowadays the importance of philosophic education increases, as it is implicitly included in natural scientific education, and humanitarian examination of the latter checks it for its humanitarian potential.

This thesis needs argumentation.

3.2 *University answer to challenges of modern science and culture*

Requirements, which are objectively made for the university by modern life in connection with the necessity to conserve the humanitarian character of the content of university education, appear as the consequence of the changes, which in their turn are connected with transformation of knowledge into the form of information. Having been transformed, it has gained new characteristics. In the form of information, it constantly changes and leads to the creation of something new and appears in nonlinearity and non-predictability of the development. It is interdisciplinary in its form, and in the chaos of interconnected informational flows it is said to bring to mind the images of “spaghetti in a saucepan” or “a ball of playing cats” as Nordstrom & Riddtrstrale (2000) say. The consequences of such transformation are as follows. Firstly, such knowledge objectively experiences a cogitary twist. The essence is that nowadays scientific knowledge is aimed only at the resultative and effective part of science (*what* is extracted?), but not at its process (*how* is this “what” extracted?). University education in the humanitarian constituent of its content takes the task of getting the idea to students of departments of natural science, so that each graduate in any professional field could see characteristics of modern condition of science and provide its humanitarian examination. Secondly, nowadays there is a new form of fundamental science – its interdisciplinary character. Science in this form is included into higher university education and gives it a fundamental character. In this form, science is a part of current university education and provides it a fundamental character. And in this form fundamental education becomes humanitarian at the same time, because both interdisciplinarity and cogitariness need humanitarian technologies for achieving fundamental education.

Thirdly, theoretical synthesis of education, philosophy and society theory occurs in conditions of knowledge informativity. Science in new forms of fundamentality has overcome the boundaries of logic and epistemology and entered social contexts. Thus, the role and importance of socio-humanitarian experience are made actual. A scientific thought has come into the field of communication with sociality of the globalized world, politics and economics. Therefore, in the university, there is an urgent necessity to combine science with such fields of philosophic knowledge as social work, sociology and politology and humanitarian-information research.

Epistemology can probably be considered the basic answer of the university to challenges of modern life. It is foundational because it influences the technologies of university education in a humanitarian way. The competency-based approach being one of them is aimed at developing not only professional, but personal identity of a student. Then, there is a question about informational competence which is considered as personal, that is humanitarian development, appropriate to information society. In this regard, the content of information competence includes an ability to think originally, to take non-algorithmic actions, creativity, etc. The problem of developing cognitive competence also becomes vital, as it is required to generate and reproduce knowledge in conditions of quickly changing professional environment. As such skill helps and contributes to professionalism

and survival of the person in the modern world, it is also considered to be a humanitarian quality of higher professional education at the university.

Thus, the answer of the modern university will be relevant to the time, taking into account all other conditions, if it conserves its humanitarian constituent of education, which has always characterized the university level and quality of its education.

4. Conclusion

Humanitarization of education has always been characterizing the university education content. However, in the last two decades (speaking about Russia) there appeared the danger of losing the humanitarian criterion of the university characteristic, as it is connected with re-thinking of the university place in the culture. In such conditions, the university obtains the possibility for transformation into an economic corporation. The humanitarian aura of the university is changed by the entrepreneurial one. Of course, the entrepreneurial spirit along with such personal characteristics as creativity, ability to think originally and unconventional actions, etc., become essential in any professional field nowadays. Nevertheless, aristocracy and exclusiveness of the university thought, general university aura, spiritual attitude and church space, which always characterized the university education, are not prior for all the mentioned characteristics. “Only when a new rise of the old university idea makes the importance of the task notable for researchers, there will be some hope that introduction of a technical high school... will be powerful”, Jaspers wrote (2006, p. 81). It is supposed that only in the case when the impulse leading to it puts onto itself at all university departments, nonmaterial renovation of the whole university and “new aristocracy of sciences” will take place.

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