

THE WAYS OF INNOVATION IN THE HIGHER EDUCATION

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I define innovation in the higher education so as with what new methods, contents, organisational solutions are we able to match the challenges of the modern world, what needs do we have to suit of the society and the subsystems of society.

Among these there are some which are traditionally present for a long time (acquire some certain professions: jurist, arts student, teacher, doctor, engineer, economist etc.). In an overall way this is the task of the intellectuals. Apart from the classics in the latter decades the number of new professions grew very fast and with the further development of the generalist trainings, special training outputs, the specialisations appeared.

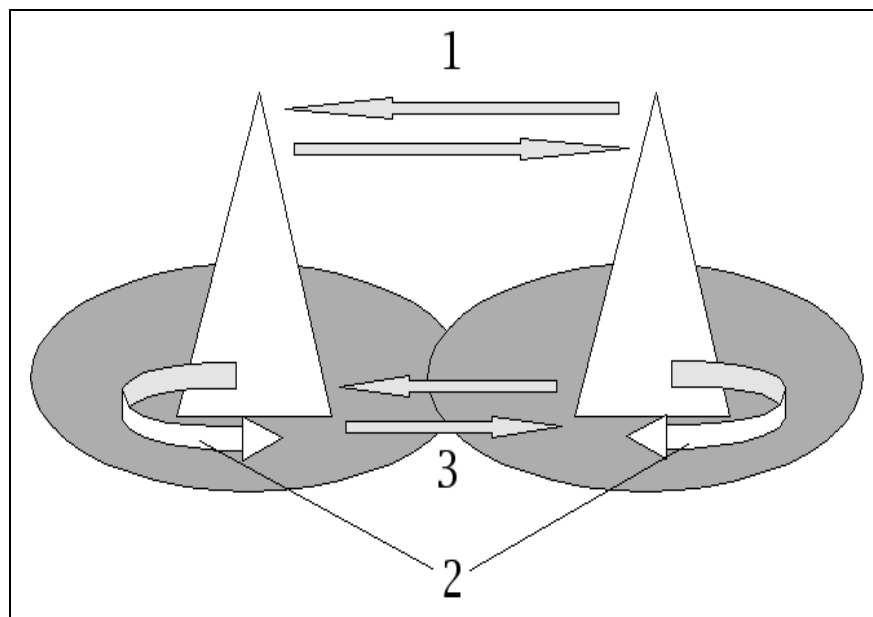


Figure 1.
University, region and their relation system (TÓTH J.)
Source: PAP N. – TÓTH J. – CSAPÓ T. (2006): Some thoughts ...

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The earlier elite education was changed, at least at the majority of the universities, by mass education. From the given ages of the more and more applicants, students wish to experience such a prestige of the university that was during the elite training era. The handling of this multiplied mass of students claims for new kind of organisational methods. These new “diploma factories” claim to have informatics systems, web pages, consultant centres, the need for a wide range of regulations, quality assurance systems, student governments with greater role and competence and the marketing of more and more services is taken place. No doubt they are innovations in the higher education. This process is not reprehensible but we should see that in order to moderate the harmful effects it is an indispensable task to clarify the educational norms and to comprehensively review and apply the consensus.

The reasons for this mass increase are multiple. Apart from the mentioned viewpoint of prestige the fear from unemployment appeared as well. As an alternative for this a lot of young people and their family chooses the university career as an alternative for this. The increased demand for graduated workforce provides partly a rational reason in the modern economy and the institutional sphere. Besides the increase of the number of graduated unemployed workforce (thousands of communicational professionals, jurists, economists and representatives of other professions) as a weird contradiction the, partially unsatisfied, need for the well-trained skilled workers (plumbers, carpenters etc.) appeared, raising numerous issues.

The age-long education organisational traditions changed concerning numerous scientific areas and specialities. The organisational form based on small numbers of departments organised around a given professor as a form of a scientific community and supply education seems to be a memory of the past. The bigger organisational units of institutions with multiple departments and faculties turned to be more accentuated using more and more professional directing methods.

Another demand is the “production” of knowledge. Within this process, one has the chance to develop in its methodology, and so there is a certain development. This is innovation itself. But the innovation of this, as we talk about the results of the functioning of innovative minds here, very poorly possible. Possibly it is unlikely to set it off ever, and the possibilities of affecting it are limited as well. In the past ten years the assuring of the education and scientific supply is carried out in the framework of doctoral schools in Hungary, just like in any other parts of the world. They function as a scientific workshop, their main task is the acquirement of science ethics and an independent research methodology.

Some words about talent maintenance. The university practice schools provide the chance to motivate and “orient” the students even in the secondary schools. Talent

maintenance should be started within the framework of the gradual training. Seeing through the work of the student from the university to the doctoral preliminary is much more effective. The National Scientific Student Conference should be more accentuated but it would be practical to provide a chance for competition at each specialities. This would partially compensate the undesired effects of the mass training.

Another problem is the spreading of the “created,” achieved knowledge. It means the appearance and deliverance of the results. For a long time these established customs were almost autocrat (lectures, books, studies in a relatively small number of periodicals). On this occasion the “ivory tower” effect was frequently mentioned. Today the answer for the increased needs for knowledge is found in the postal training, the “open university,” scientific knowledge development, the short term training intentions etc. The task of knowledge transfer is the same but on new channels and package.

The applied researches received greater emphasis only a couple of years earlier. The university sphere assuming a huge role in initiating knowledge always had a kick against the market challenges. Recently significant incentives appeared in favour of the universities to play a greater role in the boost of the economy.

The institutions only will be able to innovation when they realise that they can receive sources more and more from the applied researches to appear with projects of expectations. According to the experiences it is a joyful experience, releases new resources and frequently offer the possibility of emergence for the younger generation. It also helps to convey the social needs as well much more directly than the basic researches.

In the circumstances of market economy appeared in the past 15 years those cities and settlements have been valorised providing place and space for universities. These were considered to be innovation centres or potential ones. They thought that the presence of the institute can generate such effects providing a better relevance and renewal for the players of the market and economy. It is worth though to look behind the framework of these institutions.

Behind the directing ambitions, to consolidate their institutions, what kind of solidarity is there in the sphere of the higher education teachers, researchers? From the perspective of the scientific-institutional getting along the applied researches do not provide a favourable chance. Their efficiency is usually adjudged by their publication activity and educational success. From this perspective an applied research mean only a redundant venture. At best such a project can generate some money and one comes to the fore but only at the cost of great jeopardy. In the worst scenario numerous annoyances can hit the researcher (the development will be unsuccessful and the researcher will be stigmatic, the publication activity falls back because the work engages its time etc.). In the present circumstances the average researcher is not concerned in the success of such projects.

Even if some leaders appoint great aims in the applied researches the administrative system of the universities are simply unable to handle them. The present administration is just unable for these tasks. Nor the financial system, neither the executing apparatus can effectively handle the problems appearing through the market conditions. Such financial, judicial and methodological problems appear which the institutions created to other (higher education) tasks can not or almost unable to maintain.

The solution is the organizing of the task out of the university. This is the field of the spin-off firms, the organisations dealing with economic development. The first representatives already appeared but no breakthrough took place. The university quasi spin-off firms created on state incentives and financial background decisively are successful in the administration of the tender resources not in the competition of the university knowledge on the market.

But this is not only the question of inadequate connections to the market sphere of the university. Do the Hungarian enterprises demand this kind of relationship? According to the experiences only at a very small rate and very often they do not understand the relationship system as well namely what can they expect within the framework of the university partnership. It seems that the economic partners can get assistance more effectively with the support of the universities, apparently this is their main interest. The result in this perspective, from the point of view of market economy circumstances, is rather weak.

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