TEACHER'S CONTRIBUTION TO PROMOTE A CULTURAL PARTNERSHIP IN AN EDUCATIONAL PROCESS

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Abstract

The complexity of culture and separating it into a number of units – cultural characteristics – brings an enormous culturation of a postindustrial society, which enables an operation of various networks, that is systems of communication. The culture of 20th and the beginning of 21st century is therefore power that modifies essential social relationships; particularly the part of culture which in its narrow sense of word comprises man's intellectual and artistic activities, as it brings the hierarchy of material and cultural needs to differentiate, in a conventional way, between utilitarian and artistic or between useful and cultural. Contemporary culture forms part of an economic strategy, so it is becoming more and more an area of reasonable and prospective employment in distributing works of art, using new technologies in staging artistic events and it can not be avoided in the educational process of the young, neither in the lifelong learning of teachers.

The possible forms of a cultural partnership in an educational process emerge within schools and also in a cooperation with other institutions. This requires a more modern management of a learning process and a different attitude towards the educational process. The quality of final service is in the complexity of knowledge which leads a young person to his future profession.

Key words: Culture, partnership, education, quality.

What is the conception of culture for a human community? Culture should originate from the function of a play. Johan Huizing defined a play as an activity which has its own rules, but the meaning of it is in the play itself. A play stands outside the material interests of an individual and does not bring direct benefits. Thus social factors in real life confront a number of limitations which are hindered in mutual conflicts as regulations and laws. In a play, that is in culture, they are more independent as they can freely express their ambitions and interests. In this way a complementarity of social life and culture is completed.

Culture as a social value

The situation of culture in the contemporary society is the consequence of global social changes. The Enlightenment and humanistic comprehension of culture as something noble which serves to improve man as a spiritual being has been replaced today by a term cultural industry, where a word mostly goes about the unexploited economic possibilities of a cultural sphere or the economic power of multinationals in the entertainment industry, as contemporary culture is understood in the neo-liberal tendency. The situation of Slovene culture is no exception. Culture is acceptable for the capital only in the form of market goods, which means that culture is understood only as a market activity which accepts the mechanisms of supply and demand. This makes mass culture prevail over the more and more marginalized high culture. The term culture is replaced by the term cultural industry not only by international political and economic institutions, also the findings of experts differ or are contradictory as cultural values contradict one another. On the one hand, there is cultural
enthusiasm the consequence of which is the creation of high culture, that is art. On the other hand, cultural industry results in earning a lot of money. Some individuals see in this an opportunity for economic growth in the spheres left behind by some less interesting economic activities. The principal productional method of contemporary economy is creativity the essence of which is creative freedom. Creativity causes flexibility in the organisation of work and encourages creativeness, as it is creative workers who make added value in economy and also in culture in the broadest meaning of the word. Creativity in cultural industry should not and can not be mistaken by creativity in art, although the creative procedure can be compared to artistic creation, which in other words means the term creativity in contemporary culture comprises also advertising, fashion and industrial designing etc as social acknowledgment of such cultural contribution is ensured by legal regulation, which arranges matters on the rights of intellectual property. It has to be pointed out that in many cases culture also uses the strategies of cultural industry, especially of the advertising industry, because the structure of contemporary work of art is often based on a series of short messages. Due to the expansion of economic rationality the pressures on profit have become strained in the field of cultural production. Mostly creative workers are exposed to this problem with proprietors' requests to reduce the costs of work and increase productivity, which in practice means one needs to work more for the same payment. The consequence of this is an increased distribution of cultural goods and growth of mass reproduction. That kind of employers' thinking forces creators into unfavourable jobs due to the reduction of expenses or they are forced to make unfavourable compromises. That is the reason why there is a distinctive bigger number of independent professions and other less favourable jobs in the cultural sphere than in economy. According to some data a share of temporary employment, in Slovenia for example, is as much as three times bigger in cultural than in other spheres. The share of the self employed is twice as bigger. It is a fact that cultural industry has caused an increase in economy growth, as, according to UNESCO, the share of world trading in the field of cultural goods has increased by five times. Cultural industry could increase the cultural growth even more with the processes of deregulation, privatisation and liberalisation of public services. The success in the production of cultural industry is working on unimportant contents, producing empty, complex, ambivalent and even contradictory meanings. Cultural policy and politically declarative elements are filled with fashionable terms such as social capital, human capital, cultural capital, symbolic economy. The notion cultural capital is taken from economy. In certain situations cultural capital really works as capital, that is when is can be taken as an investment; for instance when a university degree really opens doors to better paid work posts or to social prestige. The term social capital has developed to mean social acquaintances and reputation, social support, which can all serve man as capital and help him in his economic endeavour. In this manner cultural industry becomes a leading instrument of political bodies. Finally, cultural industry should return culture back to people and should not be owned by authoritarian state institutions in the role of a censor, but this role of a censor in culture should be taken over by cultural industry by regulating supply and demand.

Cultural partnership – added value of quality in an educational process

It is a fact that first we declare ourselves as a society of capital, only then as a society of knowledge, education and culture. This is where the visions, aims and systems of values in organising an education are based. Individuals can acquire the skills and knowledge to differentiate cultural productivity from its prestige in a family and in school. Less and less an educational institution conditions the social differentiation in culture because culture, considered as public goods, invades schools also with the aim of popularising its commercial strategies, particularly the communication means such as the Internet, television, etc.
In education there is a need to search for knowledge and to mediate it to students, so an important value of every good organisation is to search for the origins of quality. The possible origins of quality as listed by Edward Sallis are well maintained buildings, excellent teachers, high moral standards of the employed, excellent exam results, specialization, parents' support, business of a school and local association. Important origins certainly are substantial financial means, the application of new technology, powerful and determined management, care for students and a balanced curriculum or some combinations of these factors. A vision of the quality has enriched education, above all, it has brought education and business closer together.

Quality might already man a process in the broadest sense, however its precise definition speaks about procedural and transformational notions, especially in organisations such as school institutions. A procedural process of quality is measurable while the latter, a transformational proces, is about the transformation of an organisation. The procedural quality, which is related to measurability, this means adjusting to specifications defined in advance, is often an abstract of its ability of purpose or use, that is why it is also called a producer's definition of quality, or, as it is defined by Sallis, a »procedural concept of quality«. Sallis puts an important emphasis on the definition of systems and procedures that are more suitable for a productional method, which is adjusted to the requirements or to the quality of a result. Quality is reached with the operationalisation of systems and the procedure and with the guarantee to be successful in operation. The results of education which can be measured with the indicators of the course of lessons are a good example of the measurability of procedural quality. Testing, argumentation and reporting are essential elements in the process of approaching quality. In short this means responsibility which ensures suitability and consistency which is based on firm indicators of procedural measurability. Important results are directed to the requirement of public responsibility and in Slovenia they are resulted in the Matura Act.

The transformational concept of quality is focused on the organisational transformation. It is focused on the needs of a customer and is not directed only against the quality of a product, but it comprises quality as a procedural complex, which in its narrow sense of an instrumental definition means a bigger number of orders. Additional aspects of quality also include the following: attention paid to a customer, servicing and social responsibility, which are intangible measures of customer's satisfaction. So procedural labelling of quality remains essential and inevitable, although it can not ensure customer's loyalty related to personal complaisance and workers' attention. Transformational quality is not achieved with the help of systems and procedures but with the needs and opportunities that might become useful and applicable. Building of a structure, especially of an organisational culture, authorises workers to comply with the requirements of a customer. Continuous improvement in the quality of a process is fusing the expectations of a customer and the authorisations held by workers. The latter focus their attention on excellence and not only on capabilities, which offers a wider and more eclectic view on quality. A transformational view on quality gives priority to a customer and so strives to broaden their horizon. In education transformational culture is a motivation function of the employed and the management in the student oriented environment.

Both procedural and transformational concepts play an important role in understanding quality. The essential difference between these two is only in the comprehension that there are various ways to achieve quality, also, besides well-developed systems and procedures, quality work requires also a change of culture which is focused on a customer. Each and every
worker is responsible for quality work in their field and should fulfil their own expectations. It happens that a specific function of a product does not guarantee its sale. This means customers may reject good articles of high quality. A different view on quality has an argument in the term Total Quality Management (TQM). Organisations that follow it see quality through customers' eyes from a simple reason: customers are the ultimate judges on quality. If there were no customers, an institution could not exist.

Total quality means knowledge of methods and understanding needs which are never completely researched. The use of such knowledge brings the needs into innovative new products and draws them closer to the market. That is why quality can be defined as something which satisfies or even exceeds users needs and wishes, what is also called 'quality in perception', when users judge quality with their own eyes, ears etc. The first and oldest concept of quality includes finding and eliminating components or final products that do not reach standards. Quality control is usually carried out by controllers or inspectors. Inspections and examining are most common methods to control quality, they are widely used in education with the purpose to find out the suitableness of measures. There is a difference between quality control and ensuring quality. The latter takes place before and during the process and tries to prevent defects. In the process quality is planned in such a way to try to ensure the production of a product with a specification determined in advance. Assuring quality is the instrument of eliminating defects and creating zero defect products, which is, according to Philip B. Crosby, also its aim. It is important for TQM to ensure, expand and develop quality to create such culture of workers to make it possible to satisfy a customer wherever a structure of their organisation allows it.

When quality is applied to education two key questions appear: what is the product and who are customers. In education a product is a sphere difficult to define. In certain cases it is still defined as a process of assuring quality. In this case a producer has to specify the input in advance and control it, then this 'raw material' goes through a standard process or a number of processes and the output has to comply with specifications determined and defined beforehand. Such a model does not suit well in an educational process as it clearly recommends a selection of students which is not consistently carried out, so a process of assuring quality begins to move away from specifications determined in advance. People bring along with themselves a number of experiences into the process of education, so they can not be standardized nor pushed into the background. This means judging quality in education is totally different from controlling products in a factory. The idea of a student as a product thus misses the complexity of a learning process and the uniqueness of each particular student. The difference between a product and service is thus in the method of assuring quality. It is far more difficult to define the characteristics of quality in service than the quality of a physical product as many subjective elements are comprised in the former one. The nature of quality in service first needs to be reflected in our views before we can speak about quality in education. Customers judge quality with their expectations and perception. Many similar situations can be found in education. For example, the reputation of an institution is reflected in its success; however, the origins of reputation are neglected in analyses and evaluations. What we do know is the fact that reputation is important in students' eyes.

Considering the fact that the aim of education is to analyse quality it is more suitable to view education as an industrial service than viewing it as a productional process. In this view the needs of an institution, the services which an institution carries out and the standards used in implementing these services are clearly defined for the first time. This needs to be done in compliance with all groups of customers, including the government, parents or local business
partners, which means customers are a very heterogeneous group which needs its own identification. Thus Sallis defines an educational process as a supplier of services which comprise teaching, evaluations and financial means and are available to students, their parents and sponsors. When quality is considered as complaisance complying with exaggerated wishes and needs of customers, it is important to clarify whose needs and wishes should be satisfied. As soon as we can find out the essence meaning of quality in education it becomes clear that added value can not be disregarded. It certainly is culture that besides education also offers upbringings and thus improves the quality of a student's life. It is not enough to speak merely about upbringing, culture requires education. The quality of an educational process requires a more liberal approach in teaching and learning. Here it is important to emphasise that teachers teach and at the same time they also learn. This approach can not disregard culture for the mere reason that culture today has a wide meaning, on the other hand only its commercial part predominates - cultural industry. Culture does deserve its own place also in an educational process of a grammar school because students have to feel cultural width as well as its individual segments, also they have to acquire suitable organised knowledge on culture that can be systematically obtained in formal learning. The complexity of a cultural sphere requires a partnership in teachers' teaching and learning and a teacher-students relationship. Undoubtedly the quality of student's cultural values influences the quality of a student's life. These values can be learnt at home, in school, in the environment where he lives. His cultural values certainly are to a great extent affected by the media. In the line of contents the informally and non-formally acquired knowledge on cultural values needs to be related to formal learning acquired in school because students need help in finding meaning of the information acquired outside school and they need to be encouraged to use the information creatively. Here a gap arises between a school and the media in the way they understand knowledge and in the use if cultural means. The aesthetics of the contemporary culture of any sphere in connection with contemporary technology enables extreme sensual experiences, comfort connected with it and drastic changes of conscious conditions (J. Strehovec, 2006). Thus the sphere of culture also includes learning for perception: for watching, listening, tasting, smelling. Developing and cultivating students' senses in the meaning of sensual emphasis of our life, the meaning of which are cultural and spiritual values such as art, is enabled precisely by a cultural partnership and reflects the interaction of teachers of different subject areas. An important teacher's role is reflected as a rational corrective of explicitly media and virtual cultures, the fields that are in the line of contents limited only to hyperaesthetics (J. Strehovec) bearing no creativity elements. Studies have been made to show the information on culture students get in school is even more out of date than the information they get on natural science. The consequence is the predominance of non-formal and informal learning over formally acquired knowledge, as most of the cultural values appreciated by students comprise only their sensual comfort, but it does not reach the area of their spiritual growth, neither their conscious comprehension of high culture. About 85 % of Slovenian secondary school students consider music a form of relaxation and entertainment. From this we can conclude this is not a partnership but the media predominate over school, or if considered from a different point of view: a gap appears between a school and the media when it is hardly possible to establish a relationship. So we can not speak about a partnership between a school and the media, but mostly about a one-sided relation of the media towards a school when speaking about offering commercially successful cultural goods. The latest technology, which is offered in the media and often also at home and the living environment, is not available in a school. The meaning of techno-aesthetics, which enriches and stimulates our sensual perception and which is characterised as interdiscipline, is not stressed enough in a cultural partnership of a contemporary educational process.
Teacher's role

When we speak about a cultural partnership and think about a partnership between cultural policy, the educational system and the media, we can not disregard a teacher's role. The improved quality in education requires a new role of a teacher and innovations in a learning process. Teacher's work is carried out in a turbulent environment which is changing his professional role and the context of his professional growth in the sense of his expert knowledge and autonomy. What is expected from him are management and communication skills. So in this contemporary educational process a teacher is becoming also a manager and a tutor in a broader and wider cultural space, besides being a mediator of knowledge. A changed teacher's role in an educational process brings along a more qualitative teaching, which also demands modern teaching technology with basic productional means which are classroom equipment and teaching materials. Some authors place among classroom technical devices also paradigms, concepts and strategies of teaching which a contemporary teacher needs to follow and he needs to modernise them by himself in his own autonomy. Modern methods of teaching and managing an educational process require an interaction between students in a classroom and students' partnership relation towards a teacher. A teacher also develops a partnership relation towards his colleagues, the principal and parents. To achieve such a relation a cultural partnership should exist among all people involved, although it is a teacher who is the nucleus of this partnership as he is the one who teaches culture and also educates for culture. In a learning process a student can enter a supposedly interactive communication between students and a teacher as a mediator between educational goods and generational experiences on the one hand and as a source of information on the other. The interpersonal communication aspect of learning is not only simply transferring information and responding to external stimulations, but it is a human process of mutual influence and a progressive change of a student personality. Students come to school with different cultural dispositions. In the line of contents their mostly non-formally and informally acquired knowledge and values have to be connected with formal knowledge acquired in school and have to be incorporated into the quality life of an individual. The output of students' cultural education is expressed in the quality use of cultural values. In a cultural partnership relation towards colleagues, superiors, parents, public relations officers and mostly towards his students a teacher creates conditions for a better quality educational process, at the same time he also influences on the quality of informal and non-formal cultural education through his partners.

A teacher's cultural partnership with his superiors enables his autonomy in the choice of contents in a learning process where the emphasis is laid on the diversity of particular cultural segments and on a critical attitude towards acquiring cultural values and with this also the needs. A teacher's partnership with parents reveals the origin of a cultural tradition of an individual and the quality use of cultural goods. A teacher's cultural environment many times differs from the cultural environment of a particular student to such extent that a partnership is not possible. In such case a teacher and a student wish their own cultural environment to predominate and often a mutual conflict arises in understanding cultural values instead of establishing a cultural partnership which only a teacher is able to build in the educational process of a student. If it is a student's cultural environment to predominate and a teacher adapts to it, usually because of the excessive wish to identify with students' cultural values, a student remains culturally intolerant and deprived of perceiving new cultural values. In such cases cultural needs of an individual or even of entire groups of students become stunted, the use of cultural goods is reduced to particular segments. As a partnership between a teacher
and a student does not exist, a student finds a unilateral cultural education in the media. A partnership between a teacher and particular media is of significant importance, especially a partnership with cultural institutions that all the more frequently see this partnership with schools as a source of income irrespective of the quality they offer. It is a teacher who decides on the quality of an offer and he makes decisions which cultural goods are suitable for his students. We can not speak about a partnership between cultural institutions and a school if there exists only a unilateral offer of cultural institutions and where the demands of a school for cultural goods that match educational contents are not considered. A teacher can establish a partnership relation between cultural institutions and a school when supported by a culturally educated management. It is also important for a teacher to be acquainted with the Internet, which enables him to build cultural partnership relations with students, cultural institutions and parents. Mutual cultural partnership relations among teachers result in students' general cultural education, which assures the added value in their future professions. It is right that a teacher is aware especially of the meaning of culture in its narrow sense, as it offers a higher quality of life, but it might also direct a young person to a future profession. A teacher's contribution to promote a cultural partnership in an educational process is neither negligible nor enviable, which is confirmed by researches, especially in the specific areas of high culture.