THE GIFTED IN THE GRIP OF GLOBALISATION

Abstract: The epistemological meaning of globalization directs us towards a historical context. Some understand globalization as a historical process that has been ongoing for thousands of years; others place it in the renaissance time period of great geographical discoveries; yet others in the time frame of global markets and creating global economies, while others place it at the onset of the information-communication era. Certainly, the word globalization in the past decade has been frequently used as a term in the fields of economy, sociology, culture, and theory of education. Some authors discuss globalization as a cause and effect that are in constant motion and entwinement; others understand it as a new paradigm that explains most social events.

However, globalization cannot be understand solely as an economic category, because in it we can notice political, social, andragogical, anthropological, cultural, ecological and technological components that are frequently quite difficult to separate. Discussions have spread towards social processes and within these also into the area of education as an important determiner of intellectual capital. The syntagma of intellectual capital is connected with terms such as: knowledge, information, creativity, innovation, ideas, abilities and health of individuals. This type of capital is by far the most important form of capital and the main source of competitive advantage in the economy of knowledge within contemporary economies. Moreover, business successes are dependent especially upon predetermined intellectual dimensions of post-production processes. Most researchers believe that technology could be the main force of contemporary economies especially in technologically advanced sectors; however, it is certain that fuel represents intellectual capital within which a group of talented individuals have a special place.

Keywords: intellectual capital, globalization, gifted, education, competitive advantage, postmodern approach.

1. Introduction

Globalisation is a process that has been taking place throughout history, however, in different forms. Some people understand globalisation as a historical process while others see it within the context of establishing the world market and developing global economy. We can certainly defend the historical component of this process that has been marked by different events and processes such as the discovery of new lands, development of trade and
migration flows, all of them accompanied by the spread of knowledge, cultures and religions (Sen, 2003). The majority of discussions on globalisation stress the economic dimension of the process, defined by concepts such as internationalisation, technological advantage, global market, competition, flow of capital, products, people, the establishment of international institutions enabling the management of these processes, etc.

Although globalisation is being treated as an important economic phenomenon, it should not be understood solely as an economic category, because we can recognise within it the political, social, andragogical, anthropological, cultural, ecological and technological dimensions, which cannot be demarcated easily. The discussions have further spread to social processes and within their framework to the area of education as the most important determinant of intellectual capital.

It is interesting to note that globalisation is being explained on the basis of numerous value judgments and from the standpoints of different methodological procedures. In line with the rational approach, characteristic of science, globalisation is being described as a law of modern economic development, marking the global domination of the international financial capital. Although it would be difficult to actually consider this process as a law, it has undoubtedly influenced the transformation of world society, resulting in the change of fundamental values, alongside changes in the economic, political and educational realities.

The described process has also triggered certain optimistic views such as the view that globalisation is responsible for the growing interaction between people and countries. And in the last twenty years the process has been developing faster because of the accelerated development in the areas of science, technology, information science, gene technology etc. The tensions between political opponents have lessened, the markets have opened, and the mobility of workers and students developed.

Scientific analysis, however, warns us about the numerous facets of globalisation. The naive belief that globalisation ideals will benefit mankind has not come true. The desired changes did not come about in underdeveloped countries, where the global functioning of the market has been responsible for the development of additional
areas of poverty, criminalisation of society and strong anti-globalisation movements. The ideology of market fundamentalism developed, wherein the roles of democratic and human values had to be weakened if it wanted to be effective.

In literature we can find different understandings of globalisation. Some authors define it as a historical process, while others substantiate it with economic processes, especially with the establishment of the world market. Still others see the information-communication era as the globalisation framework. All of these views, however, include and highlight the economic dimension and through it the role of the human being in these processes.

Interestingly, the economic aspect of these reflections stresses the concepts and processes such as internationalisation, global market, technological advantage, competition, the flow of capital, products and people, profit, and the establishment of international institutions which should lead and regulate all these processes. This is also the framework, within which the syntagm of intellectual capital is being discussed, which is nowadays more important than the financial capital and its components, such as knowledge, information, creativity, innovativeness, the ability of producing new ideas, the development of intellectual or other skills. The words such as giftedness and high intelligence are not frequently encountered in these discussions, yet the concept of emotional intelligence does come up.

2. Intellectual capital as the driver of development

In the present global conditions of management, we come upon the syntagm of intellectual capital, which we tend to connect with the concepts of knowledge, information, creativity, innovativeness, ideas etc., and which requires thinking and reflecting on the role of the gifted in modern times. This is the most important form of capital and the main source of competitive advantage in the knowledge based economy. G. Becker, who received the Nobel Prize for his contribution to the theory of human capital in the area of economy, believes that economic success of individuals, companies and nations is based on the scope and efficiency of the people who invest in themselves. He claims that technology could become the driving force of modern economy, especially of the
technologically advanced sector, but the fuel for this is human capital (Lauder et al., 2006, p. 289). Within this syntagm we can recognise the need for intellectual giants, people with high intellectual and creative abilities, especially because innovations and modifications of products play the main economic function (Galbraith, 2010, p. 17). At this stage we would expect there would be talk about gifted individuals, about projects investing in people with high intellectual and creative abilities but the discussions are not developing in this direction. We urgently need people with specific abilities yet authors dealing with this issue do not tell us how to identify them, how to help them to develop in the cognitive and conative sense. We end up believing that the gifted are not really needed since their personal characteristics, such as a predominating emotionality and intuition, anthropological orientation, excessive fantasy, non-conformity and inflexibility, or suspicion in the existing situation are much more disturbing than the factors of development in a society where everything is regulated in advance. When evaluating and assessing human history, Galbraith writes that the best achievements of history are artistic, literary, religious and scientific ones, taking place in societies where they also represent a certain degree of success. Today we measure societal progress solely on the basis of the extent of production, which is influenced by producers.

We can, however, claim that the economic value of education is gradually increasing. Becker (2002) has established that modern economic environment values education, training and other sources of knowledge, which was not the case fifty years ago. This can be deduced from the changes in the ratio between the level of education and income and is especially true of the USA.

Almost four hundred years ago, Komensky wrote in his book, the Great Didactic, that gifted individuals were a gift of nature and claimed that “education and learning are necessary for the dumb and the gifted”. The gifted need instruction even more because a bright spirit will occupy itself with many useless, unusual and harmful things unless busy with useful ones. In order to be seriously occupied, a bright mind will become entangled in empty, strange and harmful matters and will destroy itself in the process if left without opportunities (Komensky, 1995, p. 49). Already in his time, Komensky developed the concept about the kinds of giftedness and a teaching model for work with gifted learners,
which was overlooked for several centuries. In the second half of the 20th Century there were initial efforts to revive his work but in the transition to the 21st Century they slowed down.

A look at history reveals that gifted persons appeared in different cultures throughout history. In the past, persons with exceptional abilities and achievement were admired and respected, sometimes even feared or prosecuted. Changes in the attitude toward giftedness until today can hardly be observed, but the awareness about their importance for cultural progress, for scientific innovations and economic prosperity has changed.

An important feature of globalisation is the establishment of scientific and technological networks connecting research centres with big companies all around the world. These networks can be accessed primarily by those who have something to contribute: knowledge, information or capital. The researchers and entrepreneurs of the poorest countries are most frequently excluded from them and the knowledge gap is widening, pushing those with lesser knowledge to the edge, away from what is happening (Delors, 1996, p. 38). What can the subjects (asylum seekers) from the southeast of Europe contribute to the technological network? The experience from the nineties of the previous century shows that numerous young experts from whom great things were expected in their homeland, succeeded also when going abroad because of their abilities. They developed and took on responsible work in the scientific arena. For their homeland, however, these talents were unfortunately lost since most of them gradually integrated into the new socio-economic and cultural environment and founded families abroad, which does not create the most favourable conditions for different forms of mobility.

One of globalisation requirements for education is to become practical, flexible and conceived in such a way as to satisfy the needs of the market. Economically speaking, knowledge has become some kind of tradable goods. If, in the past, we talked about the relationship between general and professional education, the global world has done away with any such dilemmas. The important things are knowledge and competencies which enable someone direct inclusion in the work process and contribute to economic development, which in turn represents the generator of surplus, i.e. profit, the predominating motive.
All the documents adopted by the transnational organisations speak mainly about professional knowledge, competencies, uniform school systems and mobility, while concepts such as education and upbringing, attitudes, values, personality, solidarity, humanness, morality... cannot be found in them. It is obvious that the formation of a harmonically developed personality does not fit in with the globalisation goals and achievements. Their primary goal is to satisfy the needs of the market, industry and production, which in turn requires the formation of conformists, morally fluid and adaptable individuals and citizens, marked by a pragmatic mind, focussed on specialised knowledge and without broader theoretical background or deeper understanding of the whole. Modern theories of intellectual education focus on a comprehensive formation and development of the intellect, personality and different abilities, while on the other hand we encounter opposite tendencies of world institutions, which highlight transnational cultural identity, formation of a world or European citizen and global person, for whom certain competencies and the content of education are determined in advance. In such a system there is of course no place for an individual, for the development of his/her individual abilities, for an individual approach to the development of his personality. The educational policies do speak about civic education, in its extreme including also human rights, which, however, does not eliminate poverty and does not influence social rights.

3. Pedagogical repercussions of globalisation

Documents adopted by international organisations deal with different dimensions of education and set clear goals. Principles of individualisation and differentiation, which are specifically stressed by the theory on giftedness, cannot be found in these documents. Numerous transnational organisations which have adopted a top down approach in regulating educational processes and the quality of knowledge strive towards the so-called new vision of education which includes prolongation of education, while the educational process is directed towards the acquisition of very general competencies which can be implemented in the widest possible sense. The world organisation of school systems should focus on the development of knowledge useful for the whole world. At this point we can again ask how this sensitive population of gifted
individuals, who require an extremely individualised teaching and humane approach, can fit the mould of specific goals, contents and values, all set in advance, which, hiding behind the school fairness and equal opportunities, do away with any possible form of differentiation and try to strongly anchor the idea of a uniform school created under completely different historical circumstances. Transnational needs define also transnational competencies in cognitive, work, social and conative areas. In order for this education to be implemented as fast, as rationally and as economically as possible, all the available technology (ICT) has to be applied, which offers new possibilities and saves time but also has several negative consequences. Together with technical experts, teachers have developed different forms of web studies, for example distance learning, where the interpersonal relationship between the teacher and learner cannot develop. While the information component is being emphasised, the educational and upbringing side has been completely disregarded, i.e. the side which allows us to achieve the most precious teaching goal, the development of personality. These forms of teaching, which the teachers have agreed to adopt, are destroying the traditional school organisation. The tendency to "deschool school" (I. Ilich) is continuing in the direction of deinstitutionalisation of education, bringing with it unforeseen and unpredictable consequences.

Within this framework we must mention that the development of the individual would not be complete unless creativity were included as a component of harmonious development of the individual. Creativity influences the identification of various problems and the formation of new ideas and solutions, and encouraging creativity can contribute to the development of a comprehensive personality. Creativity is integral to the human being; it completely permeates his/her activities, which is then expressed in its impact. Creativity is certainly the basic anthropological function of the human being. It is his existential function, defining his purpose, since it is through creativity that the human being gets confirmation. This is the function, specifically emphasised by Fromm (1980), when discussing what was necessary for the formation of the positive character of human being. He claimed the need for creativity to be the main one.

In the period of growing globalisation and strong international competition, the focus is not anymore on the myth of genius as an
individual but on the identification and education of a great number of gifted children and teenagers. The last few decades we have been witnessing all around the world extreme flourishing of art, science, technology and entrepreneurship. They are being accompanied by a growing differentiation and specialisation of jobs. Although the production of new knowledge is quickly growing, the quantity of problems needed to be solved is not decreasing. Demanding intellectual, personal and societal challenges are present everywhere and gifted, creative or talented people must acquire professional knowledge and competencies as well as take on a high level of responsibility. It is therefore surprising that different international organisations and national bodies do not pay greater attention to the research on giftedness and to faster intellectual development of children. These issues, however, do interest the parents (Heller, 2000).

Countries with clearly set strategic goals are increasingly aware of the human resources as being one of the most important sources of future growth. In their plans the attitude towards education is clearly defined, however, the gifted population is not specifically addressed. The educational experts are aware that the identification, encouragement of the development and systematic training of the gifted will improve economic and social conditions not only in industrialised countries but especially in the countries of the third world. The economists and politicians, however, are not showing the necessary enthusiasm for these issues.

If thirty or forty years ago the majority of educational institutions in the industrial world focused on the problems of socially and intellectually underprivileged children, for whom the school legislation developed special supplementary programmes, there is today a consensus on the side of the profession but not politics that special teaching approaches are needed not only for children with learning difficulties but also for gifted children, who otherwise would not be able to develop their potential. Unfortunately, the last twenty years have mainly witnessed the appearance of special schools, programmes and educational projects only within the framework of civil society. Practical experiences acquired on the basis of these programmes do represent and important source for the understanding of gifted learners and for the design of appropriate programmes also in the future.
The interest for the area of giftedness is reflected in the uncountable number of specialised magazines, monographs, books and articles about the research of giftedness and about the practical measures of accelerating the development of the gifted in and outside schools. Every year there are hundreds of new publications. All the information, together with scientific work and theories, practical projects and programmes require special treatment, scientific processing and evaluation.

Regardless of today's situation concerning the world globalisation process we can establish that the history of developing and promoting gifted individuals has been very long. Regardless of present politics, the societal practice has experienced its ups and downs. The data show that even a hundred years ago they (for example the psychologist W. Stern) knew that for approximately 10% of potentially gifted children "expanded forms of education" need to be introduced, which would greatly assist the developing industry.

Today we are faced with the question how much and how the school can stimulate the development of gifted learners. The question needs to be discussed in connection with the basic function of the school. Some of the starting points are:
1. Care for the gifted must be protected from politics and ideologies.
2. Care for the gifted must be timely, mass and without any discrimination. Early identification and encouragement of giftedness should not be limited in any direction. One has to start as early as possible, but it is never too late.
3. Care for the gifted has to proceed at all levels, which means it has to encompass their whole life, including family, school, the out-of-school environment.
4. Very dangerous, but quite popular is the belief that it is only the head that is of interest and possibly in need of help. But otherwise the gifted have no personal problems or if they do, they can easily cope with them themselves. Of course this is not true, and it has been confirmed by the present understanding of the human being from the aspect of the theories of intellectual and moral education. Relinquishing the project of a harmoniously developed personality can have long term harmful consequences.
5. It is clear that teaching differentiation and individualisation are the basic conditions for the development of the gifted. Without
them many a giftedness could be overlooked and lost. Most frequently the culprit for this is the school which is satisfied with learning outcomes achieved by the gifted without much effort. In this way they cannot develop the necessary learning and work habits, among which perseverance and willingness to invest above average efforts are the most important conditions for creativity.

4. Conclusion

Two very important obstacles for the conception of the organisation of instruction and design of teaching plans for the gifted must be mentioned, which are connected with the wider globalisation issues. Undoubtedly, the first obstacle is the prescribed general school attendance, which requires that as a rule, every child must attend a state school. This historically conditioned measure developed from socio-economic and to a far lesser degree from individual human needs. It eliminated home tutors, many different programmes and approaches, and it established globally the educational conditions such as teaching goals, teaching contents, and minimum teaching standards.

The organisation of instruction based on the chronological age of the learners (study year) represents another difficulty. Pupils of approximately the same age are simultaneously working on the same contents. It is well known that even in the 18th century the system of subject classes prevailed, where the pupils were divided according to their knowledge of the individual subject. Thus pupils of the same age with different levels of knowledge were in different classes for individual subjects. Such organisation required a great deal of coordination. As the number of pupils and subjects increased, harmonisation or coordination was not possible anymore. At the beginning of the 19th century, a simpler organisation of instruction or classes was introduced, whereby the individual knowledge of pupils was not taken into account. Both of these two historically grounded changes in the organisation of instruction are nowadays so deeply rooted that they represent a serious obstacle for the humanisation of school in the sense of satisfying the needs of very gifted pupils, who would need an adapted learning tempo.

How should one proceed? The world experiences warn us that any serious moves cannot be made without a national programme for
fostering the development of the gifted. Numerous experiences from the past, when we adopted, from the professional point of view, sound documents, resolutions and declarations of quality, tell us that the design of such projects requires more than just the efforts of the profession. Without the participation and engagement of prudent politics, which has to recognise the global educational and teleological tendencies and without economy all efforts will be ineffective.

REFERENCES:

Nadarjeni v pogojsih globalizacije

POVZETEK - Epistemologija pojma globalizacija nas usmeri v zgodovinski kontekst. Nekateri razumejo globalizacijo kot zgodovinski proces, ki traja že več tisočletij, drugi jo postavljajo v čas renesanse in velikih geografskih odkritij, tretji v čas vzpostavljanja svetovnega trga in oblikovanja globalne ekonomije, četrti pa v začetek informacijsko-komunikacijskega obdobja. Vsekakor pa je beseda globalizacija v zadnjih desetih letih pogosto uporabljena v povezavi z ekonomijo, sociologijo, kulturo in teorijo izobraževanja. Nekateri avtorji razpravljajo o globalizaciji kot o vzroku in posledici, ki sta v nenehnem gibanju in prepletanju, drugi pa jo razumejo kot novo paradigmo, s katero je mogoče pojasniti večino družbenih dogodkov.

Vendar pa globalizacije ne moremo razumeti izključno kot ekonomsko kategorijo, ker v njej lahko prepoznamo politično, socialno, andragoško, antropološko, kulturno, ekološko in tehnološko komponento, ki pa jih je pogosto težko jasno razmejiti. Razprave so se razširile na družbene procese, v okviru teh pa tudi na področje izobraževanja kot najpomembnejšo določilno intelektualnega kapitala. Sintagmo intelektualni kapital povezujemo s pojmi, kot so znanje, informacije, ustvarjalnost, inovativnost, ideje, spretnosti in zdravje posameznikov. Ta kapital je daleč najpomembnejša oblika kapitala in glavni vir konkurenčne prednosti v ekonomiji znanja v sodobnih gospodarstvih, saj so gospodarski uspešni odvisni predvsem od predhodnih intelektualnih dimenzij kasnejših produciranjskih procesov.

Večina raziskovalcev meni, da bi tehnologija lahko bila gosilna sila modernega gospodarstva, še posebej tehnološko naprednega sektorja, vendar pa gorivo zagotovo predstavlja intelektualni kapital, v okviru katerega ima skupina nadarjenih posameznikov posebno mesto.

Ključne besede: intelektualni kapital, globalizacija, nadarjeni, izobraževanje, konkurenčna prednost, postmodernistični pristop