Chapter 8

Personal Values and Proclaimed Values of the Education System: Results of Empirical Research in the Case of Croatia

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ABSTRACT

The primary purpose of this chapter is to empirically analyze the relationships between the personal values of current students and the officially proclaimed values of education systems, based on the case of Croatia. To assess whether the declared values, which are intended to guide higher education, are accepted by students, a preliminary sample, consisting primarily of students from business schools in Croatia, is analyzed. The empirical findings show a high level of linear correlation among the variables, describing the students’ values and the proclaimed values of the education system. Linear regression models, using gender, level of study, and scholarship status, show a causal relationship among the four dimensions of the proclaimed values and selected aspects of students’ values. These findings can be used to rethink the potential contribution of students to the development of the Croatian education system, as well as to show possible directions of action for school leaders and policymakers.

INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, authors analyze the potential relationship between the students’ personal values and the officially proclaimed values of the educational system. This topic has been extensively studied from the perspective of the objectives and value conflicts in higher education (McPherson, 1983), which is, also, often used in the public and policy debate on the role and value of higher education (HE) in the society.

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This stream of literature leads toward many different types of studies, including the critical sociological studies of stakeholders’ power and interest, as well as subjugation of the less influential ones, within the realm of higher education (see, e.g., Smyth, 2017). Value-based analysis has been applied to the increasing competition and marketization of higher education (McKelvey & Holmén, 2009) and the structural changes of the individual roles, as well as the entire field of higher education and its market-based functioning (Ergül & Coşar, 2017). This issue is essential for the social responsibility of higher education institutions, as defined by its civic contribution (Ehrlich, 2000), stakeholder relationships (Jongbloed, Enders & Salerno, 2008) and solving the sustainability challenge (Nedelko, Potočan & Alfirević, 2017).

Value-based conflicts have been recognized as sources of (in)congruence in developing an academic identity and responding to the trend of academic managerialism (Winter, 2009). They are also discussed in the context of career issues for teaching faculty (Skelton, 2012), as well as in the analysis of value-free vs. ‘partisan’ orientation of education researchers (Greenbank, 2003) and their influence to education policy (Ball, 1997) and management of individual academic institutions (Ribeiro et al, 2016).

To sum up, despite the significant and recognized importance of personal values in business organizations (Brodbeck et al, 2000; Nordlund & Garvill, 2002), as well as in the non-profit and the public sector (Jelovec, Wan der Wal & Jelovec, 2011; Nedelko & Potočan, 2013), not much attention has been given to the proclaimed values of education, especially in East-Central Europe. Authors’ literature search has not revealed any existing studies, dealing with the interaction of students’ personal values with the values of the educational institutions and/or national educational systems, on either the theoretical or the empirical level. In addition, focus on students, as key stakeholders of educational institutions (Warwick, 2016), should provide useful information to the educational leaders and policy-makers. Therefore, the objective of this study is to discuss the potential implications of empirical value analysis for higher education institutions (HEIs), especially in small, “peripheral” European countries.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Socioeconomic Context and the Challenges for Higher Education

Modern societies are increasingly based on knowledge and innovation, i.e., the “knowledge economy,” whose development requires the active participation of institutions of higher education in economic life and innovation activities (Senge, 1990; Howkins, 2001; Carayannis & Campbell, 2009; Carayannis & Rakhmatullin, 2014). Along with their traditional mission to create and disseminate knowledge, universities and other HEIs need to stimulate the entrepreneurial development of society and contribute to the creation of commercially viable knowledge (Etzkowitz et al., 2000). This also requires universities and other HE actors to institute different forms of co-operation with other producers and users of knowledge in society, as well as to establish new organizational and institutional structures, such as research parks, university spin-offs, and entrepreneurial support institutions (Dill, 1995; Newman et al., 2004; Peet & Hartwick, 2009; Altmann & Ebersberger, 2013). Multiple linkages and activities are required from universities, along with world-class excellence in specialized research areas, in order to successfully meet the described social and economic challenges (Wright et al., 2008) and stimulate creativity and knowledge, as applied to economic activity in society (Dubina et al., 2012).