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## CHALLENGES OF SOCIETY IN THE 21ST CENTURY

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**Summary.** Society is marked by various transformations which involves major changes both individually and socially. Changes related to the social level are related to the reform of education, the future evolution of human society that requires changes in professional activity. At the individual level, the changes influence the mental structures that consequently, a kind of gap is created between the world and the personality, that creates a negative emotional state, highlighting the need and emphasis on knowledge, attitude, etc. In conclusion, the challenges at the societal level require the focus on innovation, and for the person - adaptability to change.

**Keywords:** challenge, knowledge, society, attitude.

## PROVOCĂRI ALE SOCIETĂȚII DIN SECOLUL XXI

**Rezumat.** Societatea este marcată de diferite transformări fapt ce implică mari schimbări atât la nivel individual cât și la nivel social. Schimbările referitoare la nivel social sunt legate de reformarea educației, de evoluția viitoare a societății ce revendică schimbări în activitatea profesională. La nivel individual, schimbările influențează asupra structurilor psihice ce în consecință, se instaurează un gen de decalaj dintre lume și personalitate, care evidențiază incapacitatea de a ține sub control schimbările pentru a edifica un comportament adecvat, creează o stare emoțională negativă, evidențiindu-se necesitatea și accentul pus pe cunoaștere, atitudine etc. În concluzie, provocările la nivel societal impun axarea pe inovare, iar pentru persoană – adaptabilitate la schimbare.

**Cuvinte cheie:** provocare, societatea cunoașterii, atitudine.

### Introduction

The human personality as a component part of society transforms externally but also transforms as a subject from within, changing the community and social character of humanity, provoking it from different perspectives, but it is also provoked as a reverse reversal.

In general, the term "challenge" has various explanations in the explanatory dictionary with a negative connotation (defiance, to instigate, to call to battle, etc.), but in our research it refers to the meaning "to have as a consequence" or "to produce transformations", "to determine" [8].

Living in society, each person learns from others so that, at a certain moment of his development to come with changes in certain aspects of personal and social life. The society, thus, can be confirmed by the relations of the community which are established by certain rules of functioning of social life.

Wikipedia describes the term society (human) as "a group of people between whom there are permanent relationships (common interests, values and goals) or a social group

that occupies a certain geographical area and is subject to a certain political authority and whose members have in common certain cultural aspirations” [14].

The person as a component part of society, which is full of contrasts due to the fact that some institutions fail to fulfill the tasks for which they were invested, denies at one time the social rules, or comes up with new proposals to change the state of society to which he belongs.

Our society is marked by various transformations, which involves big changes at both individual and social levels.

Throughout history, anthropologists have proposed different classifications of society, depending on the degree to which groups have unequal access to benefits such as resources, prestige, or power. Later, sociologists place societies in three categories: pre-industrial, industrial, and post-industrial [14]. Each category had its social and individual challenges.

### **Societal and individual challenges**

Each society has tried to develop its own value system, to open new horizons of knowledge, thinking and of human activities, without passing beyond own limits and borders. Nonetheless, we have to face various challenges.

#### *Societal challenges*

One of the 21st century challenges is characteristic of the post-industrial society that refers to the service-based economy, where functional professions (programmers, economists, lawyers, teachers, social security agents; marketing specialists, psychosocial assistance, public relations, etc.) become predominant in relation to those related directly to production [6, p.56]. This emphasizes shift of importance in the economy from the sphere of production to that of services.

At the same time, the society is engaged in the creation, processing, and distribution of information, through information and digital communication technologies, where as a result it is called the *information society*.

Access to knowledge through different ways, allows a speeded, easier information dissemination that leads to the educational indicator's achievement, thus determining the *knowledge society*, which represents much more than the information society and the informatics society, in fact it encompasses them [10].

In this sense, the researcher D. Nica supports the definitions of two large classes of knowledge society vectors: the *technological* and the *functional* ones.

*The technological vectors* include internet, electronic book technology, different from the books found on internet, CDs, artificial intelligence systems, the intelligent environment for human activity; nanotechnology and nanoelectronics etc.

*The functional vectors* consist of knowledge management for enterprises, organizations, institutions, national and local administrations; managing the moral use of

knowledge globally; biological and geonomics knowledge; social and individual health care system; protecting the environment and ensuring a sustainable society through specific knowledge management; profound knowledge about existence; generating new technological knowledge; developing a culture of knowledge and innovation; an education system based on the methods of the information society and knowledge, etc. [12, p.24]

In this context, the thesis is obvious: knowledge has no borders and only a collaboration at European or even global level can lead to the human needs training satisfaction, and to the development of society.

In various science fields the changes in today's society were explained, some aimed at the process, others at the change result. Thus, some researchers propose the notion of "post-industrial society", others the notion of "technetronic revolution", including "transition", "future shock " or "third wave" of civilization, which anticipates the information society [11].

Transformations related to change have a considerable influence on social relations. New evolutions in political systems and structures, transformations of the 21<sup>st</sup> century society conditions, the overflowing progress of scientific knowledge and technological development, involve great challenges and changes both, at individual and social level.

The social change process, which is challenging at the social level, is marked by inconsistency, ambiguity, discontinuity, contradictions, paradoxes, and conflicts.

Simultaneously, current social relations are determined as a result of mass migration, increased mobility - basic characteristics of contemporaneity, with an impact on the human condition, able to react to any change.

The post-industrial society dominant characteristics are the transition of the center of gravity in the economy from the sphere of production to that of services, respectively, another challenge is determined by changes in professional activity, which also change the training process requirements. The changes generate new challenges, entail education system new requirements in the Republic of Moldova. Respectively, they involve the perspectives analysis of the adapting education to a constantly changing and developing society. In these conditions, it is explicable the preoccupation, being almost widespread on a global scale, of reforming education, of developing with the tendencies of the human society future evolution, with an increased emphasis of digitalization, but also conditioned by the pandemic.

A truly sustainable society can only be based on the educational phenomenon orientation towards a desirable and challenged future depending on educational policies.

They confirm that any change in the world will consider at least the following dominant philosophies of education internationally:

- holistic development (integral and integrated) of personality.
- education for all and for each individual, as well as inclusion in its broadest sense;

- lifelong learning, as well as the preeminence of active and cooperative learning processes, compared to the processes of unilateral transmission of information;
- the reflection in education of the own conceptions of globalization and localization, of the economy based on knowledge, of the digital age and of the sustainable development, on the background of the preservation of the national values and traditions, which are continuously updated and recontextualized.

Another challenge is the *education of the 21st century*. Education is an essential component of socio-human existence, an ongoing process. As an action, education is placed between society and the individual, mediating the transfer of values from one pole to another, thus ensuring the two complementary sides: socialization and individualization, which inscribe the human being on the upward trajectory of its formation and humanization [7, p. 14-15].

The value of education is growing in a world where change has accelerated significantly, in a society of multiple individual and social options, marked by a multitude of transitions, of different natures. Education is called upon to respond to the challenges of a world of disoriented societies and individuals, a world in which landmarks, reference systems, and ethical systems have been lost and are being lost.

The connection between education and society is also mentioned by the researcher V. Cojocaru in the twentieth century [4, p.37] stating that an advanced society is inconceivable outside of an evolved education.

New models and interactive educational methods are dependent on technological innovation that could contribute to the creation of “emotional learning experiences. The new ways will focus on the emotional side of the learner, through didactic games that will add to the progress and will offer a personalized experience, through which one will learn from mistakes, repetitions, until the projected finality is reached.

The challenge is that this way fuels the dependence on the internet - the virtual world, which allows you to perform, with a simple click, many activities, from communicating and keeping in touch with people from different parts of the world to getting information, shopping or even performing operations on which world security depends.

The development of technology has also led to the proliferation of cyber-attacks, to the development of methods by which hackers can access personal information and important confidential data. By accessing the internet and an individual is leaving a "virtual fingerprint" or, voluntarily, shares personal information, filling in various fields on social networks or other sites.

Nevertheless, according to existing problems, education has the function of mitigating the negative effects of hyper technology (social autism, artificialization of life), hyper individualism (egocentrism, conflict), hyper consumerism (money deification, obesity), hyper competition (envy, confrontation), globalization (infantilism, erasure of

cultural identity) and, at the same time, the evaluation of positive aspects, such as intercultural communication, consensus negotiation, tolerance, access to other values of humanity.

In order to face these challenges, it is needed to focus on certain values. A. Toffler presents two value models: past cultural model (where the main value is “politics”) and present and future cultural model (values related to: freedom of information and action, economical and professional, political, moral freedom, etc.). At the same time, A. Toffler talks about "convergent crises" of the human civilization and cultural values systems [15], which are current to this day.

These considerations aim at the permanent restructuring and readjustment of educational contents on the grounds that in a dynamic society, specific competencies quickly become obsolete. The conception of education for the future, argued by J. Dewey, sustains that "education must prepare for the future." [1, p.67]. Thereby, the educational process must be prospectively oriented, by warning the beneficiaries about the changes produced in the society and ensuring the education for the future.

#### *Challenges at the individual level*

It is important to mention that no society corresponds to all individual desires, as a result the latter feels frustrated by reality, to which are added the challenges that any society produces through colossal discrepancies between different fields and sectors.

To ensure the development of what today is conceived as an efficient personality that is able to integrate directly into social life, it requires the formation of a multidimensional personality.

The formation of a personality, in accordance with the prospective educational ideal, presupposes the conscious engagement of the personality development theories subject to development tendencies of education, which would enable the adaptation to changing conditions both in school and social environment.

Today, it is important to approach the personality development from a mental point of view, regarded as a process of modifying the intellectual structures of the personality.

The gap between market requirements and the specialists training in certain areas, requires reforms or revisions in the current education policy.

On one hand, society needs an active involvement in political, socio-economic and cultural life, on the other hand, the accelerated pace of change, contemporary world problems generate situations of psycho-social discomfort for an individual. Anticipating and planning change contributes to reducing adaptability crises, increasing the psycho-social comfort of the personality, etc.

To reduce the gap between the world and the personality, it is necessary to focus on prospective education (educating for present and future needs), thus achieving the "leap" in development. The gap can have dramatic consequences - on one hand, the inability to

control change and build appropriate behavior, on the other hand, the feelings triggered by this confrontation (fear, uncertainty, sense of absurdity, lack of meaning in life) create a negative emotional state or determine the use of pseudo-solutions [16, p.39], which highlights the attitude.

The dictionary of psychology defines attitude as being the mental structure by which it designates “the *orientation* of thought, the deep dispositions of our being, our own state of mind with regards to certain values [13].

The general function of the attitude is the priority *orientation* of the cognitive and noncognitive resources of the personality towards the design and realization of mental, individual and social activities in different fields (culture, economy, politics, pedagogy, etc.) [5, p.160].

The professional framework is characterized as an activity that becomes more and more monotonous, and the work pace speeds up faster and faster. Thus, we find ourselves in front of two worlds: one in which boredom reigns and another in which overwork reigns. It is a result of hyperactivity that does not consider the requirements of the reality. We are forced to take new and different actions, at the same time, the ongoing activities end up disorganized. Moreover, new activities are started without an appropriate strategy. The imaginary existence begins to dominate the real one – “it becomes the predestined refuge to camouflage the reality.” [9, p.56].

Changes in society regarding professional activity claim to focus on new skills, namely critical thinking, emotional intelligence however it generally highlights the importance of prospective education, to reflect on anticipatory actions in order to remain active in the labor market.

Nevertheless, responding to society and economy demand for high-level skills remains a challenge for European universities and colleges [3, p.1].

Amongst the most important factors that determine the processes of change and social development we find *scientific, technical, and social innovations and social movements*.

Contemporary societies have established an organizational infrastructure for planning and leading innovation, pursuing change in various systems both to overcome obstacles to development and to increase qualitative and quantitative performance. Generally, many innovations respond to the challenges facing human societies.

In essence, if on one hand, change is determined by innovation, creativity, and planning, on the other hand, they cause fears of the unknown, which lead to both physical and mental problems. However, accelerated change causes not only fear, but also uncertainty, insecurity - thus, an important role would have the proposal to developing change adaptation strategies in education.

At the present stage, a new social theory is not elaborated or recognized, which in the conditions of contemporaneity could become the paradigm of a new social order.

## Conclusions

The changes and issues of the contemporary world entail both personal and societal changes. Thus, in order to create a psychological balance, a person needs to adapt to change or to create change, determined directly by the value system and by the way problems are perceived.

At the same time, societal challenges enforce states to focus on innovation and standards so as to keep the balance.

Overcoming these risks confirms once again, on one hand, the adaptation of the personality to the society requirements and, on the other hand, the preparation of society to enable change through innovation.

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