



TECHNIUM
SOCIAL SCIENCES JOURNAL

Vol. 9, 2020

**A new decade
for social changes**

www.techniumscience.com

ISSN 2668-7798



9 772668 779000

Quo vadis, Domine?

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Abstract. The recent day pandemic events and its consequences in the global world famous for collapsing good many old values and routines forces scientists and scholars to find out what to say in response. Some scientists gave a formula, which is funny for the first hearing, leaning on Baron Münchhausen's unbelievable narratives, when he pulls himself out of a mire by his own hair. The global shock hitting the world washed out numerous old routines, old solutions, old methods and old tools, however, still there are only few existing answers and only first steps made how to get out from the mire. The purpose of the author is to trigger, to help and to support thinking about the path leading to something new, which is still unknown, having few weakened pillars only, and focusing on the support higher education can establish in this battle.

Keywords. old values, new values, society, economy, higher education, robotisation.

1. Introduction

The legendary question selected for this article title is assigned to Saint Peter putting it to Jesus Crist, sounds although today very actual. The past two thousands of years this famous question had kept the main meaning unaltered: where are you going now, why are you in a hurry, who are you, and what do you intend to do?

Recent days many countries, many nations and many people putting this question for the first place. The collapse of values of the close past in the economy, in the global logistical chains, in the outsourced production of goods, in the governmental and in the non-governmental spheres, and in the human societies stick a crucial milestone in the ground: how to go ahead with the life on the Earth, and how the problems newly erected by the COVID-19 pandemic crisis can be handled?

Many countries and many people had shown themselves for an *'expert'* in this field, and voices warning about the real threat of the unknown decease were turned down and, the ignorance was the only answer to handle the situation created with Covid-19. As the practice shows all over the World, any underestimation of this threat might be punished after lethally.

The purpose of the author is to share their point of view on the recent situation and to lay down the pavement to one of the core pillars of the new era, which is the higher education. Recently, the author has sufficiently more questions than answers, like many scholars do. The unconcealed hope of mine here is to provoke and open a front for the open discussions and disputes, and to shock, to start to deal with the future to give people the trust and hope. I do know that there are many opinions pro and contra to those issues I will explain, however without

open discussions and actions taken after, there is no chance to pull out ourselves from the mire created by ourselves.

2. Situation awareness – another point of view

Having no formal academic degree in social sciences, and knowing that the author's voice is only one among those of trying to sound a symphony in the greatest international harmony, just only being driven by social responsibility, the author is motivated to share his opinion, his vision and mission.

Nobody has the Philosophers' Stone in his pocket – sounds one of the most impressive Hungarian sayings widely used. Trying to translate and adopt its main meaning to recent days: there are no wise, and no easy and no fast, and no cheap solutions serving the common social welfare available on the desk. On the contrary, the ways leading to any new successes is paved with hard work, risks, late nights, struggles, failures, doubts, disappointments, adversity, rejections, and with motivation, emotion, self-confidence, willpower, strength and persistence, action, discipline, courage, criticism, and with sacrifices.

Finally, to achieve any results and successes is a time consuming activity, i.e. some projects may last for years, or, for a decade or more. Just an example, the EU has started to trigger regulation of the integration of the UAVs (drones) into national airspaces in 2014 [1], and EASA of the EU had planned a regulatory framework till 1 July 2022 [2]. Eight years but spent for regulatory work is finally will be driven to the bay. On the contrary, there is, may be the longest unfortunate project of the RAH-66 Comanche stealth reconnaissance and attack helicopter design, which was started in 1996, and after almost two decades, it was cancelled in 2004 consuming and burning out almost 7 billion of USD [3].

The situation the mankind got in recent year concerns the entire life, the everyday habit of people. The phrase “*we used to ...*” was erased by the time, and right time to forget for long time such things described by that phrase, or better to be familiar with the message and meaning of the “*get used to*” phrase, and, what is a great challenge, to accept a new world with its beauty and with its relentlessness.

Regarding economy issues, and the general meaning of the work itself, it had never happened before that a Member of the British royal family, Prince Charles, Prince of Wales urged Britain to “pick for Britain” and help farmers in harvest period [4]. The royal said that “many people's routines have been ‘challenged’ amid the pandemic”.

In upcoming weeks and days, I think, unemployment will be the largest threat of the mankind leading to pauperization and to despondency, demolishing the faith and the hope that things can turn to the good ones very soon.

The challenge the mankind is facing is the global one, and, the COVID-19 pandemic only one among those of existing global triggers able to block and lockdown the world. We had long lasting talks about greenhouse effects, about renewable green energies, about footprint of the goods' production, about air pollution, about poisoning waters etc., however, we stepped over those omens warning us with no fears, and we have remained in our beloved comfort zone.

There are some countries still leading the fight against pandemic and against its consequences thinking that a partial, national access is a balm to handle and to control the situation, forgetting about that this disease can be spread very fast via countries and although via continents infecting enormous number of people, animals and although plants. One must put a question truly: how a global challenge of the pandemic can be handled with small countries having only few potentials to act against it, and save human lives?!

The time soon will show how different countries and nations defeated the obstacles generated by this terrible pandemic, how they behaved, and how they trying to find out the way from the 'mise'.

3. The collapse of the old habits, old norms and old values

The 'old' is an interesting issue: there are no tricks, no sudden and unexpected change of it, on the contrary, its uniformity makes it accountable. The 'old' in the form of the "*we used to ...*" is burning deeply into the common thinking and into common activity in the daily routines. This year many Cristian people being quarantined and being locked down have spent Easter in total different circumstances than they had celebrated it last year. The celebration and the festive routines themselves, like to go to the church, to meet the relatives, to sit down for joint eating at the common table, to eat and to drink festive menu, due to social distancing and being locked down, were totally eliminated, and the old norms and the old habits were turned to the fairy tale.

The same time, new forms of the behavior pattern were started in communication using ICT-devices to meet, to celebrate, to find, to order, to purchase, to see, to visit virtually. This first, non-habitual events were serving and helping people being locked down to see the light at the end of the tunnel.

We used to go to work every day to our workplaces. Of course, being quarantined, this form of the work can't help us, so the distance activity, in its wide meaning of off-line or on-line, replaced the traditional meaning of workplace. In other words, many forms of the human activity, like work, study, communication etc. were shifted to the 'cloud'.

At this point, we have to stop for a while: if to have clear lessons learned from the past three months, one can come to a consequence that many traditional forms of human activity can be conducted leaning on the ICT-techniques. Past years, maybe past decades we failed with thinking over such terms as part-time work, working in home office, distance work, and instead, we used the old terms like workplace, travel for work, personal hearing to be hired, on-campus frontal teaching etc., and we had gone ahead on the exhausting paths eliminating modern tools and modern methods available at hands.

The so-called modern era had created several new norms and values, many trends, numerous habits. Societies were developed by their own ways, and we got strange result: devaluation of values, individualism; fall of the families; defragmentation of the societies; putting self-interests for the first; illiteracy in its absolute and functional meaning; ignorance of social norms; ignorance of the law in general; populism; passivity; nihilism; '*I wouldn't care ...*' mentality. These days confirmed that the way ones are walking on, is a dead-end road. I think, the earlier we turn around the cheapest price we have to pay for the useless and senseless roaming via that path.

To defeat this decease many scientist and scholars are working recently to gain some medicine acting effectively against the pandemic. However, several and different estimations of the time needed for that discovery work were declared. The question arising here is: if the effective medicines, tools, methods and protocols will be available only next year of 2021, what will happen till in this advent period to the economy, to the societies, to the common people losing their jobs? We have to answer also a question: whether we have time to deal with answers to pandemics after defeating it, or, the same time we have to pay attention for the projects of the future? My point of view is, that we have lost too much time in the past to leave our comfort zone, and immediate actions, projects, plans are needed.

4. Higher education response – finding out new ways

One has to understand well: to take part in higher education is not a privilege of the youth, just only an opportunity to grow up in the creative milieu whilst to improve skills and knowledge. Moreover, the person enrolled for higher educational studies has social responsibility they have to express for habilitators, i.e. for their family financing and supporting his/her study, and for the tax payers, covering study fees, partly or totally.

It is very popular in the EU to issue proposals, recommendations, annual reports and statistics about the percent ratio of adults having BSc or higher level of diploma. It is a common and useful activity in normal situation in economy, and in the society. However, if to fail with the prediction of the number of the newcomers overestimating the needs the training colleges and universities will massively increase the number of unemployed in the given country. In other words, resources may be burnt out fully ineffectively, and the real labour market needs for highly educated experts would not be covered. It is the decision makers' responsibility to show right trends and right needs enticing with successes when the required training for the selected profession is chosen. Past months' events and newly set trends, I think will force many actors in this market to think over perceptions about participation in the higher education training, and to change their mind.

Many training programs in the higher education are set for those applicants being self-motivated, emotionally driven, eager to gain new skills and knowledge, ready to sacrifice, ready to invest although his/her time and finances in their study, finally resulting and leading to a harmonic, educated person. If so, the partners will be satisfied during the study period. If the profession selection was oriented, motivated by any other persons or any other social or family expectations, there is a real threat to terminate study inside the higher institutions due to low level of the students' motivation and commitment.

Higher education is an attractive challenge for many applicants to apply for studies. It has a long history. The past few decades in engineering trainings several training and teaching forms were involved. From the point of view of this article the latest two and the most important ones are the project-based learning (PBL) [5]. Such study program is running at Aalborg University, Denmark, at BSc training in applied industrial electronics, and the model is called "The Aalborg Model for Problem Based Learning" [6]. The second one is the design-based learning (DBL), which is known and widely used from mid '80s, focusing on the system approach [7].

Curricula used in higher education today reflects a traditional training principles, methods and tools, teaching and preparing a new generation of literates. The standard curriculum involves some areas of skills and knowledge at which students must be trained. The skills and knowledge required from the alumni were formulated for many decades for standard development issues. Recent days we have to stop and to turn to these skills and knowledge and to put them under the microscope evaluating their value.

Of course, the labour market is changing very rapidly, and to predict trends in it was always a great challenge although for experts. The changing world, I think will require many new skills and knowledge, and maybe the existing curricula might serve that purpose. The worldwide trend is to have and run training for delivering special knowledge. Let us see an example, which is formulated often in control engineering: "There is a given closed loop control system, evaluate stability of the system!" Easy to be familiar that this kind of the problem formulation will limit development of the skills and knowledge to that level of understanding the 'given' problem, and, this approach might limit the further development of the student in problem solution using the system approach.

There are many points of view how to establish a curriculum, what are the skills, knowledge, and attitudes required at the end of the training. The traditional thinking about curricula has led to the idea to split it into subjects, and finally, we are getting the training program in the form of the mosaic puzzle, sometimes with elements nobody can find neighbours to it. It is evident, that the rapid growth of the knowledge requires more and more time to gain them. There are many complaints in the higher education that the duration of the BSc, or the MSc training is too short and not fit to deliver as much as possible amount of information as it is required. Extension of the training duration might help till a breakpoint, at which one must say: there is no more time and no more space in the syllabus for newly introduced subjects.

The higher education trainings are serving as a tool to grow up the new generation of scholars of the societies. Being kept at the engineering training, there is a classical dilemma today: prepare for what?! Since it is very difficult to gain any input today for the study programs, it is a difficult and challenging task, sometimes a great risk to predict today any trend in the economy, mostly in the modern industry. To answer this challenge, one must take a charge and risk when to establish a new training program whether it will be attractive and selected, or not.

It is said that core and radical changes in consumers' habit are expected. In other words, in might happen that some forms of human activity will be degraded or will be washed out in the next few years. There are some forecasts in labour force market from 2016, that some of the disappearing in 2030 professions in that year of 2016 was still undiscovered. For such rapid changes, of course, to prepare the specialists might be not the best and proper answer. Instead, may be to train the generalists will be the adequate and good solution.

The next question is, how to classify skills and knowledge to be delivered to the trainees? Leaning on my own experiences gained during the past 30 years in the higher education, in my agenda I suggest three new and main areas of the skills and knowledge being involved into a newly established syllabus:

- social and human sciences;
- natural and technical sciences;
- digital literacy.

The first set of skills and knowledge listed above consists of, but not limited to: sociology, psychology, philosophy, arts, history, law, economy, economics, logistics, environmental studies, music, poetry, behavior studies, dietetics, gastronomy, languages, literature, sports.

The second block mainly focusing on the of skills and knowledge required by the modern robotics may consist of the following areas being not limited to: basic and applied mathematics, discovering chemistry, experimenting physics, developing material sciences, geography, geo-sciences, Earth sciences, natural phenomenon, biology, environmental studies, meteorology, astronomy, drawing, design, mechanics, applied mechanical structures and systems, electrical engineering, information systems, computer systems, modern control engineering, measurement technique, sensorics, robot systems, transportation systems.

Finally, the third area of the required skills are involved into the digital literacy block having possible fields as follows: information theory, informatics, Fuzzy sets and algorithms, Fuzzy systems, neural networks, neuro-Fuzzy systems, artificial intelligence, sampled and digital systems, ICT-systems, CAD systems, simulation software, programming, PLC-programming, FPGA-programming, robot programming.

After summarizing to the best knowledge what is the main goal of the training, the arising questions here are: how to train, and where to train?

To answer the first question one must understand well enough that the Gen Z is a total different stuff to deal with, and it is requiring different approach in treatment. I think, following keywords might help us in the selection of the teaching methods: time, age, era, freedom, independence, value, norm, responsibility, trust, patience, creativity, management, lead, obey, form, frame, limit, satisfaction, harmony, happiness, responsibility, attractiveness, experiments, diverse, absorbing, shocking, motivating, no formal classrooms, no traditional frontal lectures, consult, advise, instruct, motivate, design, build, try, run, execute, individual projects, setting an example, recognitions, contests, prizes, compliment, individual study programs and study plans, recognition, special treatment, good, bad, useful, useless.

This set of norms and ideas is not the exclusive one, and is isn't the Ten Commandments graved into marble plates, and of course, it may vary with specialties of the countries and societies, moreover, it may be sufficiently and basically driven, oriented, and changed by the needs at the labour force market.

The second question is the more disrupting one. Firstly, it is the right time, I think, to forget the *cathedra* in its all meaning, both in its physical and in its figurative sense, once for all. Past months' experiences of mine whilst running the online training courses at all possible levels (e.g. BSc, MSc and PhD) of the higher education have strengthened, that the situation we got in in Mach 2020, fits the majority of the students getting the right and responsibility to start to organize their life by themselves.

In my understanding, they were forced to leave their comfort zone getting up, in its figurative sense, and to start to live by the way they have chosen for. In other words, students were forced by the pandemic to leave the Mum's hotel, and were forced to start to think and to act independently and responsibly. As a rule, there might be students requiring and preferring the old study framework and the presence of the teacher. There might be a compromise balancing the two types of the educational system running old-fashion training system giving the way for the new, still unknown education.

From the point of view of the Conservatives, the new system is more close to a chaotic system. For the Avant-gardes, it is a normal situation one must give way to develop. The golden mean between two points of view might create an equilibrium, and might lead to a new educational system. When to discuss and evaluate the higher educational study programs one must remember the importance of the secondary grammar school training laying down the basement for this. Moreover, the entire educational system must be changed and turned to the future trends and requirements, keeping in mind that without knowing the past and without understanding the present, there is no way ahead to the future.

5. Finding out what a nation has to say

In my understanding, no orders of the societies can exclude themselves from the sacrifices in the gigantic global recovery project. Many people hope that return to the past '*we used to ...*' is a reality. Many people think about a realistic scenario, how to manage life in different circumstances with no returns to the past in all meaning of it, because the past had turned to the unsustainable one. Any action taken and finance spent must serve the refurbishment of the world.

Recent days empires of the world spending thousands of billions of euros to stop situation worsening and praying for the V-shape, or as the worst case, for the W-shape recession. This is the price mankind has to pay to avoid global bankruptcy. However, any budget is limited, i.e. recovering consequences of the economic crisis means cutting of budgets in all meaning of it,

and all classes might experience negative trends in their welfare, in the quality of health care, in the quality of the governmental services etc.

The governmental help and support expressed in the economy for different enterprises were very effective in the first shocking period of the pandemic, but if to get used to get the tax payers' money practically for free of charge, it might generate large differences between countries depending on their potentials, and finally, this kind of the support will wash out the basic idea of the liberal democracy famous for free competition on the market.

Summing up, the new deal is needed in the societies to avoid the worst economic crisis we had never seen and couldn't believe prior to recent pandemic. The first step is, to put the topic onto the desk, and to start to discuss. It is not a new item, there are numerous examples of such treatment from the close past. After the 2008 world economic crisis some countries (e.g. Lithuania) made very brave steps in cutting salaries, pensions and social expenditures and supports, with the ambitious plan targeting to the euro-zone membership. Finally, in 2015 Lithuania joined the team of the noble-countries using euro. It was a great project, a political suicide from the decision making people, knowing that their plan is against the short time interest of many people.

However, it is the only and right way to serve the country's and people's interest for the long time period. Leaning on populist losungs leading to nowhere might help to win an election, but if the truth is knocking on the doors after, not only those who voted for this but the entire society must pay its price.

What a nation has to say? I think there are no unique and single solutions and answers to the challenge of the pandemic fitting and satisfying all the nations and the mankind. There must be different and colorful solutions, serving the best way a the public good.

6. Conclusions and closing remarks

Returning back to the title of this article: who is addressed and who is saluted by 'Domine'? The addressee might be the general person being charged to initiate changes, or, it must be a single common person facing the fall of the old world with its old habits requiring some changes. It is said that there are lots of habits we have to think over to give the chance for the nature to recover and to breath freely.

In March this year due to lock down of the industrial sites the smog in China and in North Italy is almost disappeared; the ozone hole was almost totally closed; the greenhouse effect was minimized and the air quality was improved globally, the flora and the fauna on the Earth got healthier.

The air transportation, it is said, that due to social distancing required aboard would not be able to return to the past, a new paradigm is needed to replace the old one. The Airbus A380 aircraft production was terminated last year February. This spring the Italian vogue industry has started to reduce issues of annual collections introduced at fashion shows. China this May has regulated and prohibited to consume wild animals' meat, which was a national tradition for thousands of years. One might continue this series of the newly taken surprising and amazing at the same time decisions leading to a birth of the new norms and new values.

Of course, to be an ice-braker is requiring the courage and the brave unconventional steps, and thinking and acting fully out of the box, but I think, after a while there will be numerous followers of the first brave pioneers stepping first onto the thin ice.

The higher education is also must to respond with new training programs developing the required new values, new norms, new skills and new knowledge. The spring of the year of 2020

has brought to numerous students the feeling of freedom, responsible behaviour, and the flavour of the successes gained by themselves, and maybe, that after defeating the global pandemic they will require that freedom again, instead of frontal teaching in the boring classroom. The Jinn had got out from the magic oil lamp of Aladdin, and, to grab him and force him to return back into the magic lamp is almost impossible, i.e. better to get used to his presence outside the magic lamp.

There is a global trend in the modern world that things are going to be more complex, and to create any new is a great challenge. In that global race of being the first, the higher education might serve as the catalyst to win timely. The knowledge itself is aging very fast, the new is created often the fastest way we can imagine, and ones are forced to learn life long, time by time developing his personal skills and knowledge. If there is a strong self-motivation of the people nobody can stop the improvement.

The COVID-19 pandemic, in my understanding, is not a unique and not a direct cause for the world crisis. Recent days there are several triggering events in the world, like oil price war, reduction in the production of the automotive industry starting in 2019, the brexit etc., which might cause the crisis, of course, with different features. The pandemic of 2019 is mostly about the fall the past period style of life. The pandemic itself was only a trigger to start the collapse, and this crisis and this fall was only a matter of time. After gaining lessons learned from this period it is our responsibility not to return back into the dead-end route we got in several decades ago. The time required for the refurbishment can't be estimated, it is better to say, that it is measured rather in decades of years than in years. In spite of frustrating time horizon needed for the recovery, to get any results and changes will start with the first steps made on the right route within the framework of the harmonic social, and global agreements.

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