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Trust, Accountability, and Higher Education

Abstract

The main topics of the article are two phenomena that play an important role in (modern) higher education: accountability and trust. The author claims that we should not carry out just any accountability but rather only intelligent accountability. The aim of this paper is to contribute to the knowledge about intelligent accountability. In this framework the author wants to illuminate the key importance of trust for cultivation of intelligent accountability, the “dialectic” between trust and accountability and the importance of the proper understanding of the university. He argues that trust in teachers and faith in educational institutions is a necessary condition for their proper functioning. This faith demands that we comprehend (educational) institutions as paradigms. The author concludes that the implementation of non-intelligent accountability in education is an important factor of developing of the economicist model of education which however is incompatible with the personalist vision of education and society in general. Hence we should refute its implementation.

Key words

(non)intelligent accountability, trust, higher education, institutions as paradigms, faith in institutions, economicist model of education, personalist education

Introduction

In this paper I deal with two phenomena that play an important role in (modern) higher education: accountability and trust.

Accountability and audit are kinds of control. There is nothing wrong with control as such – when it is really in the service of some positive values – until the moment it starts to harm just the values which it ought to promote. Therefore we must take care that the effects of our control do not in fact destroy the values which we have listed below as the aims of audit and accountability practices. It follows that we should not carry out just any accountability but rather only intelligent accountability. One of the main aims of this paper is to contribute to the knowledge about the conditions, factors and characteristics of intelligent accountability.

The main background and foundation of all my thinking is solidary personalism. Solidary personalism can be best understood when compared with nihilism and instrumentalism which form its antipode.¹ Nihilism is a condition of an individual, a group, a society, culture in which on the experiential and intellectual horizons everything is levelled. The nihilistic subject cannot honestly

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For a more detailed presentation of solidary personalism and its antipodes nihilism and instrumentalism see Žalec 2011.

experience one thing or being as more valuable than any other. As nihilism is practically impossible, it usually transforms into some kind of instrumentalism. Instrumentalism is an attitude that does not regard a particular person as a goal, but (at best) just as a means. Contrary to this, for a personalist, every person is always a goal. The main aim of a personalist is the flourishing of every person. The problems of nihilism and instrumentalism are the fundamental problems of our age. They seriously hinder or even stop dialogue, solidarity, approaching the other as other etc. All mentioned and to them related goods are essential moments of the personalist attitude, ethics, relationships and existence. The fundamental (ethical) task (of our age) consists in (finding the ways for) sufficient and adequate diminishing or limitation of the extent of instrumentalist reasoning and practice.

An essential part of solidary personalism is a kind of virtue ethics which stresses the importance of virtuous people for functioning of social systems and structures.² Systemic elements are necessary, but not sufficient. These ideas are well developed for the political area in the theory of citizenship.³ In essence I think they are valid also for the area of (higher) education. The main idea is that virtuous persons are a necessary condition for the functioning of educational systems. If we want to reach an improvement in the field of (higher) education we must take care of moral and professional virtues and competencies of teachers and pupils/students and then trust them. Trust in teachers and faith in educational institutions is a necessary condition for their functioning. I will explain this thesis which is true not only for educational institutions but also in general for other institutions. The presentation and explanation of the thesis that faith – or trust – in institutions is a basis and a necessary condition of their proper functioning, is one of the main original contributions of this paper. This faith demands that we comprehend (educational) institutions as paradigms. The idea that it is possible – by some perfect and complete control – to replace or assure such faith or trust is a dangerous illusion. The efforts and activities that originate in this illusion are very harmful. They must be prevented or eliminated.

The structure of the paper is the following: first I explain the phenomenon of accountability. Then I do the same regarding the attitude of trust. Afterwards I deal with the importance of trust, with the pitfalls of accountability and with the paradoxical relation between accountability and trust. In this part of the article I explain also the thesis that faith in institutions is a basis of their working. In the last part I deal with accountability in the area of (higher) education. I pay special attention to the origins of the accountability trend in (higher) education and to the characteristics and importance of the cultivation of intelligent accountability.

The topic indicated in the title is higher education; but in some parts of the paper I cannot avoid giving views and findings about the totality of the education system. Some findings are valid for education in general, but at the same time it is higher education which is most subjected to the trends and tendencies considered in this paper.

Research activities are also an important part of universities. To investigate the research aspect of universities from the aspects of trust and accountability is an interesting task but this paper is focused on their educational aspect.

1. Accountability

The term *accountability* has different connotations.⁴ According to the broad conception of accountability we owe accountability to all people, groups and

institutions that are or will be influenced by our activities as accountable actors. (Cf. Stensaker & Harvey 2011, loc. 458–461) In the sphere of modern higher education it has become a means and a goal at the same time. One aspect of accountability – the aspect of its means – is that it is an obligation to explain, to report, to justify, to answer how the resources have been spent, for what purposes, in what way etc. (Cf. Trow 1996a) The goal aspect of accountability is that in modern societies we can observe an increasing tendency to reach the condition in which societal actors will be subjected to this obligation and will actually carry it out. The central questions regarding accountability are: who is to be held accountable, to whom, the way of performing of accountability, and the consequences of (not) carrying it out. (Cf. Trow 1996a)⁵

2. Trust

One of the most basic things which an adequate analysis of trust should take into account is the distinction between reliance and trust. (Cf. Baier 1986, 235; McLeod 2006) Trust implies that we ascribe psychological attributes to the being we trust. I can rely on my watch, but I cannot say that I trust my watch because a watch is not a psychological being. We can define trust as following:

Trust is a reliance which refers to some being. It is based on certain psychological characteristics of this being that the one who trusts ascribes to it. If trust is important to understand accountability then it is already clear that we cannot understand accountability without taking into account some psychological elements or factors.

2.1. *Relevant forms of trust and pitfalls of accountability*

Trust is certainly a pretty differentiated concept with many different dimensions. (Cf. Salomon & Flores 2003; Uslaner 2008; Fukuyama 1995) The kind of trust which is most relevant when we deal with trust in higher education is strategic trust. Strategic trust takes into account interests of the person who trusts or of the person to whom one gives trust. There is a very clear example which illustrates the second case. Let us imagine that a bomb has been attached to the head of a person that we trust and that this bomb would explode if the person that we trust lied to us. (Cf. Yamagishi 1999) The strategic interest of the one who trusts could be that despite the fact that she does not have all the necessary information, she trusts a particular person, group or institution because this is the best strategy.

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See for instance MacIntyre 2000; Galston 1991; Kymlicka 2002; Audi 1998; Nussbaum 2001a, 2001b; Žalec 2007a.

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See for instance Galston 1991; Kymlicka 2002 (especially ch. 7); also Flanagan, K. and Jupp, P. C. (eds.) 2001.

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For a detailed presentation of various meanings of the term accountability see Stensaker and Harvey (eds.) 2011, especially Stensaker

and Harvey 2011; also Trow 1996a and Vro-eijenstijn 1995.

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We can of course discern several dimensions and aspects of accountability and according to them several forms and typologies of accountability. (Cf. Trow 1996b, 1996b; Stensaker & Harvey 2011; Vidovich in Slee 2001; Harvey and Knight 1996; Bovens 2006)

Furthermore we can see that trust in higher education is trust in the institution rather than trust in an individual person or a group. As such it is similar to strategic trust. It is based on experience and on the perception – how good the institution in case does its job or performs its function. (Cf. Uslaner 2008)

A special kind of trust is the crucial factor of the economic success of a community (cf. Fukuyama 1995). This kind of trust relies upon some moral qualities (values, habits, virtues, beliefs, principles etc.) of the subject we trust. It is morally laden. It is not purely strategic in a narrow sense that it counts only on morally neutral or even non-moral qualities of the agent we trust.

The idea that complete control and checking of a system is possible is a dangerous illusion. System measures are necessary and welcome inasmuch as they contribute to the implementation of proper values. But not all system measures are good nor are they omnipotent. Besides, we cannot be sure whether the system will function or not. So we must (at least partly) rely on some elements of the system without sufficient evidence. Not only rely, we must trust in them and have faith in system and institutions in order for them to function. But at the same time we must do all we can that our trust is rational and well founded, that our trust is warranted.

What is then the attitude of a rational person regarding trust, in short, what trust is rational trust? Here is my short answer: a rational person uses systemic instruments as far as this is possible and productive. But she knows that total control, checking and assurance are impossible. At the end she must trust some people. So she should do everything she can to surround herself with people whom she can rely on and whom she can trust. The belief that there is an almighty system and that we can achieve the state of total reliance where no trust is needed is irrational. But on the other hand, the belief and attitude that we can trust anybody is an illusion and is also irrational. Hence, the neglecting of beneficial use of systemic instruments is irrational as well. However, the final foundation of rational trust is formed by competent and virtuous people. Therefore both extremes are irrational and (hence) damaging: the refusal of implementation of beneficial accountability and audit measures as well as counterproductive and harmful exaggerated steps in the opposite direction. The ground of all good is competent and virtuous persons and relations between them. Systemic measures can importantly contribute to their flourishing but as soon as they obstruct and destroy this ground we must abolish them. A rational person is capable of recognising this line between positive and negative effects of systemic measures.

3. Faith in institutions is the basis of their working

If we cannot prove that what we believe is good (or what is needed for good) exists we must believe in good (and its ground). This is a Platonic approach which is revealed to us through the study of the myths that we find in Plato's philosophy. (Cf. Reale 1991) We cannot (scientifically) prove the existence of the majority of best things. Hence we must believe in them if we want to think that they exist. What is good must be loved and must be believed that it exists even if we cannot prove its existence.

This is also true in the case of social reality. Social reality consists of ideals in which we believe. In this sense ideas or ideals create social reality and its history. Social ideals are a self-fulfilling prophecy. Take for instance an example of a negative competitive attitude. At first we educate our children so that they become negatively competitive persons and then we claim that the world is

full of negatively competitive people and that one cannot survive if she does not act as a negative competitor. And a vicious circle is closed.

Universities and institutions of higher education in general cannot function well if we believe that they can work only if we can totally control them and check the workings of every constituent of them. The problem is then how to cultivate the belief in the good working of universities despite the fact that we cannot control the correct functioning of all their parts. What basic view about universities and of institutions in general provides the context, the horizon that makes such belief, such “faith” reasonable?

I think that the account of universities as paradigms is such view. The examples of paradigms are the Bible, Jesus Christ and every human person, works of art (for instance Sophocles’ *Antigone*, Leonardo’s *Mona Lisa*, etc.), constitutions, churches and also universities.⁶ Paradigms are entities which can never be totally understood, rationally grasped or explained. They can be (partly) used and imitated, but never totally controlled, subordinated or instrumentalised. As Richard Dreyfus (2004) put it, they are untotalisable. They can be destroyed, of course, but not totalised. If they are totalised or totally instrumentalised (let us call such a totally instrumentalist use of something simply instrumentalism or an instrumentalist use) the performance of their proper function is made impossible. In this sense they are actually destroyed or eliminated. The instrumentalist use of institutions which are paradigms is bad even if it is motivated by good intentions. The non-instrumentalist attitude toward institutions makes the working of the “God’s eye” possible. The “God’s eye” sees immeasurably more and farther than any individual and any group. It sees the consequences we cannot see because of our limited perspective, no matter how we try and how good and honest our intentions are. For this reason we must believe that the non-instrumentalist attitude toward institutions (including university) is something good. We must cultivate a humble attitude toward institutions and be conscious of our limitations. Such humbleness and consciousness are a necessary condition of every sincere respect towards institutions and paradigms. We must accept that something transcends our capabilities and our comprehension of good and that what is objectively good cannot always be comprehended as such. But, on the other hand, there are “devices” (namely institutions) that help us overcome our deficiencies and that enable us to act in the right direction even if we are not able (at a particular time) to clearly perceive or understand why an action or arrangement of matters is good. As by commanding of really big devices – for instance jumbo jets or submarines – when we cannot rely only on our direct perception but must rather “trust” the instruments, so in the case of good management of society we cannot rely only upon what is evident and clear to us but rather must “trust” in thinking and acting which is in accordance with the respect of institutions as is for instance the university. We cannot cultivate the instrumentalist attitude toward such institutions if we really want them as instruments or guides in the sphere of what is not immediately perceivable, clear or evident. The faith that the world transcends the capabilities of our management and that we cannot rely only on what is perceivable, clear and evident to us is necessary if we want to avoid the damaging instrumentalist attitude towards institutions such as universities.

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For a more detailed consideration of paradigm – as this term is understood and used in this paper – see Dreyfus 2004 who, following and

interpreting Heidegger, also alleges classical works of art and Jesus Christ as examples of paradigm.

4. Noxiousness of traditional modern age epistemology

Opposing the acceptance of transcendence and of the non-instrumentalist reliance on institutions can be strengthened by modern age epistemology. This epistemology claims that knowledge is a justified true belief. An epistemology which opposes this traditional modern age epistemology does not have to refuse its definition of knowledge on such a general level. A problem appears because of the traditionalist understanding of justification which holds as justified only that which can be inferred from sense experience or from self-evident premises. Contrary to that, non-traditionalist epistemology claims that also beliefs that are not justified in such a way can be warranted. Maybe the most famous epistemology of this kind has been developed by Alvin Plantinga (1993). According to Plantinga there are three conditions for a warranted belief:

1. Cognitive apparatus must work properly;
2. There must be a correspondence between the environment and cognitive apparatus;
3. There must be a plan of a designer according to which things have their proper functions.

Also cognitive organs or apparatus have such proper function. This function is not created by us. We only discover it on the basis of studying the history of a thing.

The study of the history of institutions shows that institutions can be good guides for societies to achieve their goals and that the proper function of institutions is just such guidance. But a necessary condition for institutions to perform their role is that a sufficient number of people in a society believe in institutions, which means that they cultivate the non-instrumentalist attitude toward institutions. For a short time it may sometimes appear that the instrumentalist attitude toward institutions is better, or that institutions are not good guides, that it would be better to get rid of them etc. But in the long term it mostly turns out that the non-instrumentalist attitude toward institutions is the right way.⁷

Thus good working of institutions is a matter of “faith” and “trust” in institutions and in the foundations that make such functioning possible. Instrumentalism means just the absence of such “faith”. For this reason the instrumentalist attitude toward institutions corrodes their good working.

5. Institutions as paradigms

Institutions like university should be understood as paradigms in order that they can perform their proper function. In the area of science, art, religion, education and also politics the instrumentalist approach should never prevail because this renders working of the central creations and institutions on these areas impossible. This does not mean that we should not use these creations and institutions also as a means but we must be aware that they can perform their function only if we treat them (or approach them) as transcendent. They, i.e. paradigms, are interpretatively inexhaustible, rationally unmanageable, untotalisable. They can never be totally understood or explained (in this sense exhausted) yet they can be imitated. The proper relationship toward paradigms is some kind of imitation. For this reason also tradition is a kind of paradigm and we can compare Kuhn’s concept of a stable scientific paradigm (cf. Kuhn 1970) with the respect of tradition⁸ and conforming to it.⁹

6. Trust and accountability: a paradox

Regarding the relevance for the topic of accountability we may define trust as a provision of support, means etc. for institutions without their obligation to account specifically how and for which purposes they have spent or used them. (Cf. Trow 1996a) Such trust may have several different degrees.

Now we can notice a certain paradox regarding the tendency to increase accountability and the aim to increase trust. On the one hand, one of the central aims of accountability schemes is to increase the shaken trust in institutions of higher education. On the other hand, accountability is in a certain sense opposed to trust. So one may say that in the cases where the relationship of trust really is present, accountability is superfluous. Moreover, one may add, exactly the fact that we introduce more and more severe procedures of accountability proves that we do not trust in institutions of higher education. Is the claim that increased accountability implies less trust and that increased trust implies less accountability true? In order to be able to provide a grounded answer to this question we must consider the origins of accountability trend regarding education in more detail.

7. Origins of the accountability trend in the managing of education

First, there is a general trend in modern societies: from trust to accountability. We may locate the beginning of this transformation in the eighties of the previous century. The state which was protective towards its own bureaucracy and towards those who performed its service became increasingly evaluative, it has transformed in the so called audit society. (Cf. Power 1997; also Strathern (ed.), 2004) As a reason for this transformation one may allege that the increasing complexity of society must be accompanied by an increased clarity regarding the role and accountability of individuals and institutions in their providing of required services. Also in the sphere of higher education we can note the traces of this development worldwide. (Cf. Stensaker & Harvey 2011, loc. 368–390)

Secondly – and more specifically regarding the situation in higher education – many people have the thought that higher education is in a crisis and their trust in it has decreased. Some of them think that the present educational system cannot be resuscitated in the present form and suggest alternatives. Others think that the situation can be improved by way of increased accountability. School leaders and teachers should be held more accountable by means of standardised tests and interventions, by way of punishments and rewards

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“Trust” in institutions is in important respects similar to trust in a scientific research program in Lakatos’ meaning of this term. For more on this last concept see Lakatos 1978.

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One of the anonymous reviewers of this paper has noticed that there is also important research about universities as *institutions*, that is organizations with enduring values rooted in society and history (cf. Maasen and Olsen (eds.) 2007). Being a paradigm and being an institution is of course not mutually exclusive

and the understanding of universities as paradigms does not exclude that we see them as institutions, but it rather enriches us with new insights in their nature and functioning. Moreover, I point out that there is a pretty considerable and interesting similarity between (scientific) paradigm and tradition (cf. footnote 9).

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For more about the similarity between (scientific) paradigm and tradition see Barbour 1974, Žalec 2007b.

for schools which do not meet pre-established performance standards. The aim of the accountability project is to increase trust in national school systems, including higher education and universities. It promises also to increase equality in society by increasing the quality of public schools accessible to poor children and students, therefore being an essential moment of the so called *The No Child Left Behind* policy (hereinafter referred to as NCLB). (Cf. Katz & Quill)

Because of these alleged reasons it is hard to object to the project of regaining trust in institutions of the national school system by means of implementation of standardised forms of assessment. Yet such restoring of public trust has some unfortunate consequences. Katz and Quill (op. cit., 3) allege the following:

“a) the demoralization of teachers and administrators who no longer feel trusted to exercise their professional discretion; b) the narrowing of the curriculum so that test taking efficiency in areas of verbal and mathematical literacy trumps higher-order thinking and cultivating the skills and dispositions critical for working with diverse others in a multicultural democratic society; c) increased drop-out rates and declines in graduation rates, especially among minority children; d) the virtual elimination of serious conversation over the broad purposes of universal education in contemporary life. (...) Thus, as is often the case when political promises are translated into public policy, a gap emerges between the promise of reform legislation and policy, and the subsequent reality of those policies.”

Especially to the point (b) from the above quotation we may add the following words of Martin Trow (1996a, 13):

“We may need to measure something to justify awarding degrees and certificates; but we need not share the illusion that our examinations measure the effects of education. Our impact on our students can never be fully known; it emerges over their whole lifetimes and takes various forms at different points in their lives. Those effects are mixed up with many other forces and factors over which we in higher education have no control – and among these are the student’s character and life circumstances.¹⁰ Moreover, our influence on their lives takes many different forms, the most important of which are unmeasurable.”¹¹

Moreover, we are faced with the paradoxical consequences that increasing trust policy by way of increased accountability has – from the NCLB policy – exactly the opposite effects from the intended and desired: the achievement gap between the privileged and those in need of help is bigger than before the implementation of the increased accountability policy. Besides – and maybe even more important – the effect of the implementation of the ideas of the more accountability movement is or could be an important reduction of the goals and achievements of education: instead of shaping generally educated persons who will cultivate life-long learning and are capable of performing the role of a citizen in a liberal democratic and multicultural society (cf. Juhant 2002), the aim of education is reduced to achieve some cognitive skills (stress on mathematics and literacy) measured by standardised tests. Such approaches reduce the space of education which suits the context-dependent needs of students, reduce the importance of social science and humanities, arts and music, reduce the possibility of autonomous creation of a curriculum, and reduce the role of teachers to mere instruments. In general terms, the more accountability account does not bring more equality and equity, quite to the contrary, it brings less autonomous and more rigid, depersonalised, standardised and instrumentalised education, directed to the improving of test scores – and exam notes – of students. It brings less joy in education and (as a consequence) very often dissatisfaction – and even frustration – by teachers and students. Besides, because many schools are not able to achieve good

test scores – at least not in a short time – public trust in those schools is even lower. And among those schools are often precisely schools with students coming from social groups (for instance particular ethnic groups, minorities etc.) which are already in a worse position. So we may agree with Katz & Quill (op. cit., 5) who conclude:

“Thus, the critical irony of recent accountability policies can be summarized as follows: rather than building morale among educators and restoring trust in the public schools and universities, the accountability movement has often undermined this morale and the accompanying trust quite seriously.”

We may also agree with Trow (1996a) who claims that accountability is a double edged sword. While on one hand it gets good press in certain populist circles, it is implemented at a price to institutions under its obligations. As Trow (cf. *ibid.*) notes there are several reasons for this claim:

- 1) Accountability is alternative to trust.
- 2) Accountability to outsiders weakens the autonomy of institutions (while obligations to report are usually disguised obligations to conform to external expectations).
- 3) Accountability to outsiders can be also at odds with adequately solving sensitive issues within educational institutions and (thus) with effective governance and even with plain truth telling.
- 4) It can threaten the freedom of professionals to define their work and (thus) reduce (fruitful) diversity among educational institutions.
- 5) It transforms the academic staff into pure employees.

Trow (1996a) also pointed out two characteristics – at least in Europe – in the area of higher education in last decades:

- 1) On the one hand the policies aimed at reshaping higher education in the image of private enterprises while on the other hand at increasing the regulatory power of central government.
- 2) Decline in trust is inherent to the growth of mass higher education.

What are the origins of (2)? According to Trow (cf. *ibid.*) we may allege the following:

- 1) The first origin is (1) above.
- 2) The enormous increase of costs for higher education since WWII, especially on the account of the so-called public purse.
- 3) A constantly larger diversity of forms of higher education (and consecutively) of teachers and students. The body of students is more diverse regarding their interests, beliefs, talents, class and ethnical origins etc. Such changes have of course influenced the way and role of pedagogy, teaching and the curriculum. The stress is on teaching, on the teacher's working with students. Students do not study independently alone as much as they did in the past. The difference between secondary and higher education has – at least in these regards – diminished. However, for many of these forms of higher education we cannot claim that they are elite forms of higher education.

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Strahovnik (2011) discusses an important relationship between the character and reasons for action.

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But, as Trow (1996a) pointed out, our inability to measure all the (enduring) effects of education does not hinder us to learn what educational institutions are doing good and what they are doing wrong.

- 4) The tendency in the European countries to reduce the budget for higher education.
- 5) All these changes have caused the proliferation of the evaluation industry and increasing implementation of more accountability policy. Yet – as we have already noticed above – more accountability policy often produces the decrease in trust in (public) higher education.

In short: The pressure for greater accountability is an expression of the decrease of trust. An important positive factor for the last is the increasing heterogeneity of the higher education area, which is an effect of the fact that in the last decades higher education has transformed from an elite type of education into mass education.

As Trow (cf. *ibid.*) pointed out, one consequence of such a development is also that the meaning of degrees has changed. Students get their degrees at different institutions at which the performance of education, the demands and levels of difficulty are different. Thus degrees are more and more assessed on the basis of the reputation of the institution where they have been earned.

There are further reasons for new (external) assessing of the quality of work of academic material:

“In the UK, as elsewhere, the growth in the size of departments makes it impossible for a professor to stand as a guarantor of the quality of work of everyone in his department. And appointment procedures to lower ranks become more various.” (Trow 1996a, 12)

Trow (cf. *op. cit.*) also pointed out some further positive factors of the increasing accountability trend:

- 1) Increasingly globalised economic competition and government’s anxiety about the performance of universities in the face of it.
- 2) Increasing expansion of the system of higher education.
- 3) Old ways of quality assurance are not trusted any more in the new situation.

“So what to American eyes seems to be a manic concern for quality assurance arises in part from the withdrawal of trust in the institutions, now seen as full of less able students and teachers; and in part from anxiety about what these less distinguished students and teachers are doing, especially in the new non-elite sector as per capita support declines drastically.” (Trow 1996a, 12)

We may agree with Marilyn Strathern who wrote (cf. Strathern 2004, 2) that audit practices are an inevitable part of the bureaucratic process. It follows that audit practices and accountability tendencies are practically ubiquitous. Audit is an instrument of accountability. This instrument opens the possibility for global professional consensus. As such it is almost impossible to criticise audit and accountability – at least in principle – because they are perceived as a way of carrying out the values which are in principle also the values of academy (I list these values below). (Cf. *ibid.*, 3)

New accountabilities are new practices. Their central part is constituted by audit practices. These audit and accountability practices are put in force in the name of various values, in the name of their realisation, increasing, spreading and protection. These values are responsibility, openness regarding the outcomes, widening of access, NCLB, equality (of opportunity), increased productivity and contribution of institutions to the welfare of a society, better use of (public) resources, bigger equity, bigger economy, increased trust in institutions (subjected to practices of (new) accountability and audit), internationalisation, increased connectedness, cooperation, compatibility and comparability.

Strathern points out that checking itself implies trust – trust in measures which we use and also in sources of information – since it is not humanly possible to check everything. Besides there is also a level of operational consensus needed. She stresses – by referring to Rimoldi 2004 – that the spreading of assessment procedures to areas which were spheres of informal learning before is a mistake. (Cf. op. cit., 7–9)

Strathern notices that opinions in the EU about accountability differ. Only some members of the EU praise accountability. They hold that new accountability and audit are the key elements of new organisational rationality which is a necessary condition for common work. On the other hand, some other members think that the new audit and accountability regime is an insult to the very mechanism of trust, honour and (other) personal relationships, but it is precisely these that should form the basis of our common work and action. (Cf. op. cit., 9–10)

There is another interesting point about self-checking noticed by Strathern (2004, 14, n. 5). At least of the higher education institutions it may be demanded to prove that they really carry out their own ways of checking (peer referring, student evaluation...).

Strathern also finds out that by dealing with accountability we cannot avoid dealing with ethics (cf. op. cit., 14). She rightly and in a pregnant way formulates the key problem when we deal with accountability: How to adequately face the challenges which are on one hand obstructive (or even destructive) yet on the other hand revitalising? I think that the key word of the right answer is *intelligent accountability*.

8. Intelligent accountability

The idea of intelligent accountability attracted the attention of educators when Orona O’Neill pointed to it in her *Reith Lectures about Trust* from 2002 where she pointed out to the negative effects of the culture of accountability. In her third lecture titled “Called to Account” O’Neill said: “The new accountability is widely experienced not just as changing but I think as distorting the proper aims of professional practice and indeed as damaging professional pride and integrity.” She suggested that we should increase accountability yet without its harmful effects. She used the term intelligent accountability. Such accountability demands “more attention to good governance and fewer fantasies about total control”. (Ibid) She pointed out also that a lot of things that we should account for are not easily measurable and cannot be reduced to a set of stock performance indicators. (Cf. ibid)

In their paper “Intelligent Accountability: Sound-Bite or Sea-Change” Michael Cowie and Linda Croxford report that in Scottish education¹² – but also in other public services in Britain – we can notice, in the last two decades, an increasing stress on performance management and quality assurance. But on the other side, the last policies from the Scottish Executive indicate a shift from the top-down systems that are oriented to measures and comparing attainment, to approaches that give more space to the teacher’s professional

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For a detailed and up-to-date overview and presentation of the situation in higher education from the accountability point of view in different parts and regions of the world (Australia, Africa, China, Eastern and Western

Europe, Latin America, United States), international trends, challenges and responses to accountability initiatives etc. see Stensaker & Harvey (eds.) 2011.

judgment and assessment of pupil's/student's broader educational outcomes. (Cf. Cowie and Croxford, *op. cit.*) The new model stresses – as opposed to the top-down model – the self-chosen goals. (Cf. *ibid*) There is a tension between the top-down model of accountability on the one hand and the need for greater professionalism of a teacher and her autonomy on the other. The new model is thus characterised by a (revitalised) focus on the professionalism of the teacher. (Cf. *ibid*) With these ideas we hit again upon the question of intelligent accountability. The basic and central question is: How might we make the accountability system more intelligent? (Cf. *ibid*)

According to Cowie and Croxford (*cf. op. cit.*) the concept of intelligent accountability implies:

- 1) Trust in professionals.
- 2) Focusing on self-evaluation.
- 3) Appropriate measures which do not destruct the aims of schooling.
- 4) The measures that stimulate full development and flourishing of every pupil/student.

There are further observations and findings of Cowie and Croxford (*cf. ibid*) that we should bear in mind:

- 1) An exaggerated stress on easily measurable results can destroy the aims of education. Also other national priorities have their own values but are more difficult to measure.
- 2) Formal processes of audit can create an audit culture instead of the desired genuine culture of self-evaluation.
- 3) We must apply measures of performance which cover the appropriate challenges of schooling – not only academic achievements – and which do not end with the destruction of educational aims.
- 4) We must focus on self-evaluation with minimum external inspection.
- 5) We need a shift away from the top-down audit culture.
- 6) We must focus on processes that support learning.
- 7) We must support a shift away from prescription to responsibility for professional judgments and creativity.
- 8) We should support personalised¹³ and flexible education (which corresponds to specific characteristics of concrete educational contexts and situations). Yet such education is incompatible with accountability approaches to education that stress too rigidly an over-standardisation and want to compare different schools and subjects from some such aspects from which they should not (or could not) be compared.

There are several (other) negative effects and consequences of the non-intelligent accountability – which exaggerates and too exclusively stresses literacy, mathematical knowledge and natural science together with standardisation – that we should avoid:

- 1) Moving in the direction of a pure economicist model of education.
- 2) University which does not teach how to really think because it neglects what cannot be measured or calculated.¹⁴
- 3) Moving in the direction of less dialogic learning which is opposed to the proper idea of universities as learning communities.¹⁵

In her book *Not for Profit: Why Democracy Needs the Humanities* Martha Nussbaum deals with a model of education which she calls the education for

economic growth. We may say that on the one hand, the economicist model stimulates the accountability approach in (and to) education; on the other hand, the accountability approach stimulates the implementation of the economicist model.

Regarding democracy Nussbaum finds out that the education for economic growth does not demand any special democratic elements. An equal access to education and decent education of all is not needed. A nation can economically grow and prosper even if the rural poor remain illiterate and without access to basic computer resources. Concrete evidence for this thesis Nussbaum provided by pointing out the processes in many Indian countries. (Cf. *op. cit.*, 19–20)

I think that we may distinguish between two basic models of education, including higher education and universities: let us call the first one the economicist model (hereafter EM) and the second the personalist model (hereafter PM). From the point of view of humanities and philosophy we may establish the following about these two models: EM is a model which is interested only in economic prosperity and the contribution of education (including universities) to it. It is inclined to negate the importance of humanities and philosophy for adequate education (i.e. education needed for economic growth) since it presupposes that humanities and philosophy cannot contribute to economic prosperity, and in addition to that overlooks their other contributions.

PE is interested in the development of humanity in every single person, in the flourishing of every human being as an integral human being. This model ascribes a huge importance to humanities and philosophy for good education, and importance of the cultivation of philosophy and humanities at all educational, academic and scientific levels in the creation of a healthy society.

As Nussbaum points out, for EM is characteristic not only the neglecting and ignoring of humanities and art(s), but even fear of them. Education for economic growth is hostile toward cultivated and developed sympathy because such sympathy is incompatible with moral obtuseness and insensibility. Moreover, it is inimical to them. Yet moral obtuseness and insensibility are needed for implementation of the economic model which neglects inequality. Humanities and arts develop moral sensibility and sensibility for inequality. For this reason the partisans of education for economic growth fear the humanities and art and oppose their inclusion in education. (cf. Nussbaum 2010, 23–24) Nussbaum concludes:

“Pure models of education for economic growth are difficult to find in flourishing democracies since democracy is built on respect for each person, and the model respects only an aggregate. However, education systems all over the world are moving closer and closer to the growth model without much thought about how ill-suited it is to the goals of democracy” (*op. cit.*, 24).

Conclusion

In this paper I have tried to outline what are the main characteristics, elements, conditions and factors of the intelligent accountability on one hand,

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For a more detailed discussion on reasons for personalized education and its defence see Žalec 2012. For a general outline of personalist pedagogy see Böhm 1995.

14

For a Heideggerian consideration of the neglecting of teaching how to think in the con-

text of the modern university see Gibbs 2004, especially Ch. “The Unconcealment of Being through Learning”, p. 120 and the following.

15

See Gibbs 2004, Ch. “Potentiality through Community”, p. 123 and the following.

and what are the main pitfalls or where can we go astray in the process of accountability implementation on the other. Further I have tried to illuminate the key importance of trust for the cultivation of intelligent accountability, a “dialectic” between trust and accountability, and the importance of the proper understanding of university (university as a paradigm).

The above reflection reveals that implementation of the non-intelligent accountability in education is an important factor of developing of EM, which however is incompatible with the personalist vision of education and of society in general. Hence we should refute its implementation in education in general, be attentive to avoid its infiltration in educational systems and fight as strongly as it is needed to prevent it. On the other hand we must be aware that functioning of modern bureaucratic society in general and (higher) education in particular demands implementation of appropriate audit and accountability mechanisms. So we cannot get along any more without some kind of accountability that is adequate to the modern situation in society and education, but this accountability must be rather the intelligent accountability.¹⁶

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Bojan Žalec

Povjerenje, odgovornost i visoko obrazovanje

Sažetak

Glavne teme ovog članka su dva fenomena koja igraju važnu ulogu u (modernom) visokom obrazovanju: odgovornost i povjerenje. Autor tvrdi da ne bismo smjeli provoditi bilo koji oblik odgovornosti nego samo inteligentnu odgovornost. Cilj je rada doprinijeti znanju o inteligentnoj odgovornosti. U tom okviru autor nastoji rasvijetliti ključnu važnost povjerenja za kultiviranje inteligentne odgovornosti, »dijalektiku« između povjerenja i odgovornosti, te važnost ispravnog razumijevanja sveučilišta. On tvrdi da je povjerenje u nastavnike i vjera u obrazovne institucije nužan uvjet njihova ispravnog funkcioniranja. Ova vjera zahtijeva da obrazovne institucije shvaćamo kao paradigme. Autor zaključuje da je primjena ne-inteligentne odgovornosti u obrazovanju važan čimbenik razvoja ekonomističkog modela obrazovanja koji je nekompatibilan s personalističkom vizijom obrazovanja i društva u cjelini. Stoga bismo trebali odbaciti njegovu primjenu.

Ključne riječi

(ne)inteligentna odgovornost, povjerenje, visoko obrazovanje, institucije kao paradigme, vjera u institucije, ekonomistički model obrazovanja, personalističko obrazovanje

Bojan Žalec

Vertrauen, Verantwortlichkeit und Hochschulbildung

Zusammenfassung

Die Kernthemen dieses Artikels beziehen sich auf zwei Phänomene, die eine beträchtliche Rolle in der (modernen) Hochschulbildung spielen: Verantwortlichkeit und Vertrauen. Der Autor stellt die Behauptung auf, wir dürften nicht irgendeine Form der Verantwortlichkeit durchführen, sondern vorzugsweise nur die intelligente Verantwortlichkeit. Das Ziel des vorliegenden Papers heißt, das Wissen über die intelligente Verantwortlichkeit zu festigen. Im Rahmen dessen intendiert der Autor, die Schlüsselbedeutung des Vertrauens für die Kultivierung der intelligenten Verantwortlichkeit, die „Dialektik“ zwischen dem Vertrauen und der Verantwortlichkeit sowie die Wichtigkeit eines gezielten Verständnisses der Universität zu durchleuchten. Er vertritt die Ansicht, das Vertrauen zu den Lehrern und der Glaube an die Bildungseinrichtungen seien unabdingbare Bedingungen für deren einwandfreies Funktionieren. Dieser Glaube beharrt darauf, die (Bildungs)einrichtungen als Paradigmen zu begreifen. Der Autor schlussfolgert, die Umsetzung der nicht intelligenten Verantwortlichkeit innerhalb der Bildung sei ein gewichtiger Faktor zum Aufbau des ökonomistischen Modells der Bildung, das sich jedoch als inkompatibel mit der personalistischen Vorstellung der Bildung und der Gesellschaft im Allgemeinen erweist. Aufgrund dessen sollten wir dessen Implementierung zurückweisen.

Schlüsselwörter

(nicht) intelligente Verantwortlichkeit, Vertrauen, Hochschulbildung, Einrichtungen als Paradigmen, Glaube an die Einrichtungen, ökonomistisches Modell der Bildung, personalistische Bildung

Bojan Žalec

Confiance, responsabilité et enseignement supérieur

Résumé

Les sujets principaux de cet article sont deux phénomènes qui jouent un rôle important dans l'enseignement supérieur (moderne) : la responsabilité et la confiance. L'auteur affirme que nous ne devrions pas faire preuve de n'importe quelle forme de responsabilité, mais uniquement d'une responsabilité intelligente. L'objectif de cet article est d'apporter une contribution à la connaissance de la responsabilité intelligente. Dans ce cadre, l'auteur vise à mettre en lumière l'importance cruciale de la confiance dans la culture d'une responsabilité intelligente, la « dialectique » entre la confiance et la responsabilité, ainsi que l'importance d'une juste compréhension de l'université. Il affirme que la confiance dans les enseignants et la foi dans les institutions d'enseignement sont une condition nécessaire à leur bon fonctionnement. Cette foi nous demande de comprendre les institutions d'enseignement comme paradigmes. L'auteur conclut que l'application d'une responsabilité non-intelligente dans l'enseignement est un facteur important de développement du modèle économiciste de l'enseignement, incompatible avec une vision personnaliste de l'enseignement et de la société dans l'ensemble. Par conséquent, nous devrions refuser son application.

Mots-clés

responsabilité (non)intelligente, confiance, enseignement supérieur, institutions comme paradigmes, foi dans les institutions, modèle d'enseignement économiciste, enseignement personnaliste