



Education and Work: Employability?

„If you think wrong, you can
act right only accidentally“

According to the critical theory of action, we act on the basis of our orientations, given the case that we have available the required competences, skills, knowledge and own the power to overcome possible social or natural obstacles.

Orientations are values, beliefs, prejudices or opinions on the one hand.

Those orientations are learned from the beginning of our existence without a chance to critically reflect them.

Primary socialisation is more or less nothing other than adaptation to all circumstances that are already established prior to our birth.

Most significant in this process of adapting orientations is the mother tongue.

When learning a language, we unconsciously incorporate into our thinking all the special meanings and feelings that underlie every word.

On the other hand, orientations are based on our own experiences, considerations, investigations or enquiries.

Pre-condition to owning these kinds of orientations is to become self-conscious during the development of one's own personality.

Some of the most important words with regard to the most important areas of current societal life are

in general: work, economy and money

With regard to studies: education, university and employability.

“**Work**” has many meanings: e.g. work as product, as a programme, as a process.

It is more adequate to understand work as the most important activity in order to secure and to improve the societal conditions of life.

But:

Currently, the meaning of work is reduced to paid work.

The word “**economy**” is of classical Greek origin.

It is a combination of “οἶκος” (oikos) – household – and “νόμος” (nomos) – law.

Thus, economy is the necessity to act adequately with limited resources.

But:

Today the predominant understanding of economy is to think in terms of business and money.

“Moneyism” as a religious belief system became more and more the basic orientation of activities.

The function of **money** is, with no doubt, to enhance the exchange of products and services as commodities of markets.

Money in this understanding is nothing other than an abstract medium – a symbol for a promise of the issuer of money to deliver commodities and, correspondingly, a symbol for the owner of money to have the claim to receive the commodities.

But:

Many people see money as an end in itself – or even more unenlightened – as an actor:

“Money rules the world.”

“Money never sleeps.”

“The power of money.”

In a social-scientific understanding with regard to human beings, **education** is an interconnected process of stimulus and response.

Stimulus from the outside of the individual, from society and nature.

Response of the individual with the effects of learning and becoming a personality.

This process is ongoing from birth (or even prior to birth) until dementia or death, intended or unintended.

In a broad understanding, education also means the personal given state of the educational process regarding knowledge, skills and feelings of the individual.

The entirety of all kinds of educational stimuli and respective responses can be called the education system of which the school system is an important part.

But:

The most predominant understanding of education is currently “schooling”, neglecting the fact that schooling is only a transitive or active stimulus of education.

Schooling as education can only be successful if there is a response from the individual. Response is understood as at least a minimum of awareness.

But:

Public understanding of education is normative,
generally based on values like becoming
a responsible citizen,
a useful worker,
an employable graduate.

University derives from the Latin word “*universitas*”; i.e. the community or entirety:

- *universitas magistrorum et scholarium*, the community of teachers and students
- *universitas litterarum*, the entirety of sciences.

But:

In the present understanding, the university is an institution of higher schooling with professors as employees and students as clients.

The term “university” is used for all kinds of even very specialised institutions of higher education or even for non-academic organisations.

Community and cooperation at universities were successively replaced by hierarchy and competition.

Knowledge as the object of teaching and learning has become a commodity on the university market.

Money, not science, is the latent but more and more manifest orientation of action inside the university as well as from the outside.

The word “**employability**” belongs to employ, employment, employer, employee.

- Employability means suitable to be employed.

Employability is one of the essential normative purposes of the so-called Bologna Declaration of the year 1999.

Its underlying “Gesellschaftsbild” (concept or image of society) is that of the disappearing industrial society with many factories, hired labour and thousands of employees.

But:

As a result of increasing productivity, employees are no longer needed in such great numbers. The consequences are growing problems of unemployed people, time-limited employment, precarious jobs, mandatory flexibility and – in general – an uncertain financial future also of graduates.

To one-sided aim solely at employability as the purpose of studies is thoughtless and disregards the fact that self-employed people gained and have gained their professional bases at universities.

Besides this tradition, many universities have established chairs for teaching entrepreneurship:

Graduates should become ready to create their own business.

Conclusions

To reduce the full meaning of socially most important concepts like

- work, economy, money and
- education, university, employability

to only single aspects can hardly contribute to securing and improvement of societal conditions essential for life.

If activities are guided by insufficient orientations, the outcomes must be inconsistent or even contradicted.

Therefore:

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act right only accidentally.“**