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Development and Education – Inseparable Siamese Twins

Development and education – inseparable Siamese twins, it's so obvious, but nowadays these words are getting a new meaning.

Currently humans' civilization suffers another wave of revolution changes, knowledge becomes the most important factor of the development. We're getting into knowledge based economy, in times of information society. Resources and values are created now by mental work than physical one, number of long term (constant) work-places is decreasing, same as number of low qualified jobs. In new economy important are and will be important such factors as creativity, imagination, social and emotional abilities, ability to learn. Knowledge workers are defined as "symbolic analysts", workers who manipulate symbols rather than machines. They include architects and bank workers, fashion designers and pharmaceutical researchers, teachers and policy analysts, artists and programmers. In so called advanced economies, more than 50 per cent of workers are knowledge workers.

New economy gives new challenges especially to rural areas' inhabitants. How today's education should look like to prepare them for participation in knowledge based economy (KBE), for living in information society?

I'm trying to answer that questions showing one of possible ways of including rural areas' inhabitants into KBE. It's not fully tested, easy in implementing and secure yet. It's kind of vision, challenge, ambitious task. Thoughts presented here are flowing from my work on creating theme villages in Poland and from discussion and work connected with project ERDE (European rural development by means of educational activities - www.erde.lt, www.globalvillages.info/index.php/ERDE). The project was realized in years 2003 – 2005 by partners from Austria, German, Lithuania, Poland, Slovenia and United Kingdom.

Education should be connected with rural areas development. It's task should be not only spreading the knowledge, but also preparing rural areas inhabitants how to earn on knowledge, skills and emotions. In times of KBE we can't allow ourselves to spoil resources of knowledge, we can't afford long time of learning and delaying moment of using gained knowledge. It may appear, that some hardly gained informations and trained skills are already useless and we should forget about them a.s.a.p. Education should prepare people for earning in new times, and simultaneously for renewing, creating and accessing villages resources of knowledge, including hidden, informal knowledge. Investing in education should return much faster and lead to personal and village development.

Realization of this aim should be connected with:

- Changing villages schools and libraries into village development centers, in places of creating it wealthy.
- Creating work-places and earning sources around knowledge, skills and emotions
- Appreciating meaning of informal, hidden knowledge (hand skills, cultural, social, mental and spiritual values).
- Creating farms' and villages' specialization in connection to KBE (educational, creative farms and villages)
- Using ICT for education and creating knowledge on long distance.
- Changing villages into learning organizations, in quasi companies earning on knowledge and emotions, accessing regional and global networks of cooperation.

Process of changing villages into learning organizations and quasi companies requires passing:

- From education set on units to education set on societies.
- From teaching younger by older to intergenerational and inside generational exchange.
- From teaching everyone with all to individualization of learning process with using various intelligences.
- From education limited in time to long life learning.
- From education limited in school to education in village environment.
- From school working like catapult sending best students outside and leaving on villages those who failed to pass exams to school working also according to needs of rural society.

Village working as a learning organization should be open for new ideas and curious to the world, cooperating with scientists and artists – investors of new era. Such village should encourage them to participate in village life and development in new way. Not as explorers of knowledge and inspiration draining these resources without returning with something else, but as co-operants, co-creators of village's new look and new offer.

One of thing discouraging to learning is often changing of professions and qualifications, forcing to constant learning. Fortunately together with this conditions appear new possibilities connected with micro-trainings and micro-works. Sometimes it takes only a few moments to learn new skill and way of earning on it.

We're facing challenge of preparing rural areas inhabitants to new social roles: explorers, trainers, teachers, artists, therapists. It should be accompanied by better using of resources of kids' creativity and often hidden adults' talents. It forces us to seek new ways of educating and creating knowledge, fit to frames of villages' situation. Among them most important seems to be learning by doing, in specified situation, with solving real and actual problems, connected a.s.a.p with possibility of earning. It attaches especially villages with high unemployment rate.

Villages' inhabitants are usually cautious in accepting theoretic knowledge, they don't trust words, want to touch, to see, to check. And this is the way of learning used often in implementing village renewal projects. It can be clearly seen on example of villages in Lower Austria visited by thousands villages' inhabitants from all world wanting to see, what really means village renewal program and how it's realized. Lower Austrian renewed villages are already getting on the road to KBE, creating knowledge resources and opening access to them. Among these villages are also theme villages, which created specific profiles and are earning on offering knowledge, skills and emotions connected to the theme.

Inhabitants of Sierakowo Sławienskie, one of the first theme villages in Poland which was started to created in year 2001 are earning on leading grounded role playing games and on training other villages' inhabitants. Within only 4 years 15 of them are became actors in grounded role playing game and organizer of kids and youth stay in the village. They haven't learn this from books, but in reality, often on their own mistakes.

Where it's hard to encourage all village to be active, there created farms with various profiles: educational, therapeutic, artistic, sport etc.

Villages, where inhabitants entered way to KBE are starting same as for example St. Arbogast from Vorarlberg and Kirchbach from Steiermark to participate in global exchange of informations, organizing scientists conferences („Days of utopia”), cooperating with thinkers from around the world.

In villages which are becoming learning organizations and quasi companies, learning starts to become content of it's inhabitants' life. Saw by prism of Peter Senge's theory it attaches such dimensions as: achieving personal mastery, identifying and changing mental models, creating and developing common visions, team learning an system thinking. In such villages we can see clear twin connection between education and development.