

and other root causes of inequality, that lie at the heart of poverty, disease, climate change, and violence among other global development challenges. Without values, development remains illusory.

Paradoxically, within HE, there is a lack of well-defined methodology for incorporating values into the process of translating knowledge to practical development. For example, the concept of "internationalization of higher education" is advocated for under the assumption that preparing students with international awareness and intercultural competence effectively equips them for the intricacies of an interconnected global future [2]. Yet, the outcomes of this awareness and competence remains unspecific and unclear, due to a lack of analysis of the underlying values in this endeavour. Unsurprisingly, internationalization of HE has often exacerbated inequalities and injustices, with benefits accruing only for some individual institutions and sectors.

This raises the question: what must intercultural competence in HE consist of for it to build and sustain socially responsible and resilient citizens for effective local action and global peace? We respond to this question in two points in the context of transforming HE to promote impactful, sustainable, intercultural competence and awareness, and consequently, global peace:

### The multiplicity(ies) and complexity(ies) of a human being

Effective education necessarily recognizes the multifaceted and interconnected nature of human beings. A human person embodies various dynamic identities that are shaped by their interactions with other people, over time, and by all aspects of their environment including beliefs systems. This lays a foundation for addressing complex global challenges and promoting sustainable peace and development.

In HE, collaborative experiential learning with an interdisciplinary approach is paramount. This approach requires active participation of HE institutions, local communities, international partners, and industries in co-producing, co-assessing, and co-implementing knowledge. For effective and mutual collaboration, the stakeholders have to humanize the pursuit of sustainable development and foster a sense of shared responsibility for global peace. This inclusive and cooperative endeavour would ensure effective and sustainable consideration of and response to the diverse needs and aspirations of the world and all creation therein.

### Mainstreaming Spirituality in HE Teaching/Learning, Research and Service

At the core of human life and development is education, the process through which humans create and transfer knowledge, practices and skills from one generation to another. Healthy interrelationships, here interpreted as spirituality,

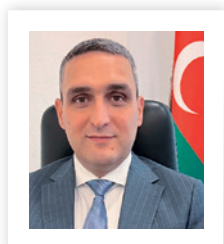
necessarily promote the quality, relevance and impact of the process. Recognizing the multiplicity and complexity of humans and recognizing the need for healthy relationships is the foundation of education and development. Yet, in HE, spirituality is overlooked and sometimes dismissed as irrational, while prioritizing empirical disciplines for material profits for individuals at the expense of healthy interrelationships. This reductionist view undermines the essence of human beings and their interconnections with the entire environment.

The consequence of individualistic insatiable greed, "which places short-term profits above long-term peace and prosperity" (Alung San Suu Kyi), leads to global strife. For global peace and sustainable development, fostering healthy interrelationships through individual acts of compassion and civic responsibility is indispensable. African spirituality, embodied in *Ubuntu*, emphasizes loving relationships with oneself, and nature (living and non-living, visible and invisible), including the supernatural, recognizing the unifying spiritual force within each person. Integrating Ubuntu values in HE can lead to greater interconnectedness, care, compassion, and mutual respect among human beings, contributing to a peaceful and flourishing global community. Cardinal Newman observes: "An academical system without the personal influence of teachers upon pupils, is an arctic winter; it will create an icebound, petrified, cast iron university, and nothing else" [3].

### Closing Remarks

Quality and relevant HE for global peace integrates teaching and learning, research and service with all stakeholders working together systematically in respectful interrelationships towards clearly set outcomes. African sages say: "Yes we can" (Barrack Obama); "All of us have a God [love] in us- and that God is the spirit that unites all life, everything that is on this planet" (Wangari Maathai); and "If people can learn to hate, they can be taught to love, for love comes more naturally to the human heart than its opposite" (Nelson Mandela).

## 16 Will the university become a center of socio-mental development?



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The higher education landscape is currently undergoing significant transformations in response to globalized processes and technological advancements. These

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changes encompass various aspects of the educational process, including tasks, technologies, and conditions. These transformations have led to the widespread adoption of new educational practices. While the term "informational" characterizes the quantitative capabilities of the information environment, it is equally apt to label this era as a "semantic era." In this context, information can convey meanings that shape the direction and dynamics of contemporary global shifts.

In light of these changes, the acquisition of various skills has become invaluable for modern university graduates. This includes the ability to discern underlying intentions amidst information wars and "double standards." Embracing open, dialogic communication based on mutual understanding and collaboration has also emerged as a crucial competency. As a result, it has become evident that universities need to prioritize teaching comprehension within communication.

Addressing this need involves nurturing the socio-mental sphere of individuals through targeted learning initiatives. It is essential to underscore that simply focusing on raising awareness and developing competencies is not enough to produce capable graduates. The term "socio-mental" extends beyond the conventional interpretation of "mental," encompassing not only the content and functional dimensions of consciousness but also the technological aspects, methods, and mechanisms employed to comprehend texts, events, and more.

Consciousness employs a structured approach that transforms received messages into various virtual forms, each with differing levels of complexity. The quality of understanding hinges on the forms that consciousness has mastered. Consequently, speech encompasses more than just the content of mental processes.

The pertinence of philosophical and sociological comprehension in education arises from the current crises afflicting the higher education system. Widespread dissatisfaction with its outcomes, institutional rigidity, and the disconnection between specialist training and societal needs underscore the need for transformation. The nature of the entire education system must change not in the sense of changing the very foundations and directions of teaching, but to adapt to the nature of modern activity and to transition and implement educational innovations into practice. Such will ensure countries' entry into and maintenance of position in the global information space

and knowledge economy. This transformation, however, does not imply a complete overhaul of teaching's core principles and directions. Instead, it necessitates aligning educational activities with the implementation of innovations, facilitating countries' integration into the information-driven knowledge economy, while bolstering its global standing.

Higher education is becoming a main source of innovative economic development, which is especially important for countries like Azerbaijan. Establishing strong institutional links between education and the state has thus become increasingly critical. It is worth noting that the dissemination of higher education often requires the support of the state apparatus, material resources, and financial assistance.

The modern university in Azerbaijan, shaped by European scientific thought, has historically maintained close ties with the state and relatively indirect connections with the market. However, the current global landscape, marked by the shifting dynamics of the market-state due to intensifying globalization, has placed universities in a scenario of constant evolution. While the state's influence is diminishing, with some exceptions, and the market's influence is on the rise, universities grapple with challenges to their identity, spirituality, and cultural foundations. This changing landscape involves an interplay of university, market, and state, fundamentally altering the dynamics that were once confined to the university and state. This transformation invites a reevaluation of the role of universities in this new context, possibly encompassing discussions of academic values like freedom and autonomy.