

Whither the university? The Novum Trivium and the transition from industrial to knowledge society

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Abstract

Beyond the Bologna Process key objective of achieving a common structure of the European tertiary educational format is the fundamental issue of the changing content of higher education. The highly specialized curricula of the Industrial Society no longer fully meet the needs of an emerging Knowledge Society that requires citizens with entrepreneurial and inter-cultural capabilities to innovate and respond to change in an increasingly inter-connected world. In this article we propose an innovative approach to undergraduate education called the Novum Trivium, comprised of (i) academic specialization, (ii) innovation and entrepreneurship, and (iii) a language and culture in addition to one's own, as a new higher-education paradigm for the Knowledge Society. This vision of undergraduate education aims to contribute to the realization of the Bologna Process objective of better integrating education, research and innovation. The Novum Trivium brings together three diverse, yet complementary, educational skill sets, in a modern version of the Tripos degree introduced by Cambridge University in the 17th century as an honours degree in mathematics that eventually became a format that encompassed three closely related disciplines such as politics, philosophy and economics. The Novum Trivium is also inspired by the medieval Trivium of grammar, rhetoric and dialectics (logic), the essential elements of education for all.