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Commercialization of the education of economists versus integrity of the university¹

Jan Szambelańczyk²

Abstract: The article presents changes in the education of economists in Poland, referring in particular to the experiences of the Poznań University of Economics and Business and its institutional predecessors in the years 1926–2016. The aim of the article is to analyze the contemporary framework of the university as a commercial enterprise versus the classical integrity of the academy, related to Humboldt's conception of a university. The analysis includes an approach to the modelling of educational programmes in economics, starting from serving the needs of the immediate business environment in the inter-war period to education according to the standards of the university which conducts research and educational activities within the system in harmony with the Bologna Process. Proposals of an analytical approach were also formulated in connection with dilemmas concerning the organization of a university and its organizational units which differ in their substance, quality and personnel. The concluding part expresses the opinion that although transformations of academic culture are multidirectional and complex, the present times have witnessed a final dismantling of the classical academic culture and which takes on the shape of the corporate culture of businesses operating in the market economy, dominated by economic calculus and the application of competition rules. It is important to ensure that the humanistic values of science and higher education as the mainstays of *universitas* are not lost in the processes of rationalizing and reforming the structures of universities of economics.

Keywords: university mission, characteristics of educational reforms in economics, periodization of reforms, modelling the education of economists.

JEL code: A23.

Introduction

Paraphrasing the thesis of N. Gregory Mankiw, it can be said that *God created economists to solve people's problems, not to formulate elegant theories.*

¹ Article received 24 November 2016, accepted 8 January 2017. This is a modified version of the inaugural lecture delivered by the author at the opening ceremony of the academic year 2016/2017 at the University of Economics and Business in Poznań on October 12, 2016.

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Interpretations of that thesis constitute a relatively rich set of approaches, starting from the directive of practical usability and finishing with the principle that there is nothing more useful than a good theory. Those interpretations, much different in their essence, reflect the range of the stakeholders' discourse on the sense of academic education and also, in a sense, on the purpose of the university in the contemporary culture in general (Pelikan, 1992). In such a broad context the commercialization of the education of economists fits the mainstream of an entrepreneurial university (Clark, 1998)³ and should not raise any substantial controversies. The classical integrity of the academy, in turn, is related to Humboldt's concept of the university (Kwiek, 2010; Schimank & Winnes, 2000; Sułkowski, 2016; Zakowicz, 2012)⁴. Therefore a confrontation of the process of commercialization of education with the realization of the classical mission of the university – with its typical integrity – at the inaugural lecture at the University of Economics may be treated as a kind of intellectual provocation⁵.

Using the generalized category „education of economists” at a higher level idealizes the process which in its essence is not and cannot be homogeneous in any of the possible dimensions (Teichler, 2009), either with regard to the area of education or a professional category, or the set of universities or faculties, if only in the universities of economics, where the teaching process involves programmes concerning the field of economic sciences. This is not all as the homogeneity is difficult to find when referring to the fields of economic studies bearing the same name or to specializations related with them. There is no homogeneity even with regard to particular lectures, classes or seminars conducted by various academic teachers. Little is changed in this area by the standardization of learning outcomes, harmonization of procedures in the preparation of study programmes programme supervision or institutional control of various internal or external bodies with the Polish Accreditation Committee at the forefront (Antonowicz, 2015).

Despite the far-reaching institutionalization and standardization of education the key subject of those processes is still a human being and people in their complexity, extremely rich in content and the non-identity of relationships (Brzeziński, 2016). Critically important is the fact that people act under

³ According to Burton Clark, characteristics of the entrepreneurial university include: a strong management and leadership core, integrated entrepreneurial culture, diversified financing of the university, expansive development of peripheral areas and a stimulating core of academic activity.

⁴ Foundations constituting the Humboldtian type of university, which became common nearly worldwide and forced out the previous formation originating from the Middle Ages, are: unity of knowledge and science, unity of research and education, unity of lecturers and students, cognitive freedom and academic autonomy, as well as *raison d'état* (unity of national spirit).

⁵ This provocation involves the risk of personalized message reception which is not the author's intention.

the conditions of lesser or greater freedom when realizing the mission, aims, functions or tasks of the academic teacher (Waring, 2010). It is also significant that despite the limitations of normative nature (e.g. acts, ordinances, statutes, regulations, instructions, procedures) or political nature (e.g. principles, objectives, guidelines, political correctness) institutions, i.e. the schools of higher education along with entities constituting them (senate, rector, faculty council, dean, head of the institute, head of the department, teacher, student, etc.) have always been characterized by certain autonomy. This autonomy results, among others, from the fact that the bodies from outside and inside educational institutions never had and still do not have absolute power and cannot exercise a full control over implementation of the binding model, or even over educational programmes (Minton & Khale, 2014; Sławek, 2012). If this were to happen the idea of the university would be transformed into a concept of a factory producing standardized graduates and the relationships in such a factory would resemble those described by Orwell in his novel *Nineteen Eighty Four* (1949). Moreover one cannot minimize the processes of the automatic internal adaptation of the university's community to external conditions which usually do not lead to identical solutions or reactions (Allport, 1935).

When dealing with the problem of commercialization of education in connection with the university's integrity, I have to make a reservation that the formulated assessments are fairly subjective being based upon many years' observation of social practice. The overview covers several decades of structured observation, experiences or research, conducted from various positions on the subject of analysis (both from the viewpoint of an insider and outsider) in the institutional structure of education and the state. This overview goes well beyond the locality of one's own Alma Mater, taking into account other universities, both in Poland and abroad. Worth mentioning is the fact that the results of this overview do not provide the grounds for categorical empirical generalizations, being rather a kind of comparative background (Trow, 2005). Therefore instead of formulating some generalized conclusions an in-depth case study was conducted for the University of Economics in Poznań boasting a 90-year-old tradition.

Section 1 includes the brief characteristic of vocational education at the beginning of the Higher School of Commerce in Poznań up to the current activity of the University of Economics and Business in Poznań. Section 2 explains the concept of the university integrity, comparing the concept by K. Twardowski and integrity of the University of Economics in Poznań defined in a formalized way by an acronym of the word PRESTIŻ (PRESTIGE). Section 3 is devoted to the stages of change in educating economists in Poland. Finally Section 4 includes conclusions from the analysis and postulates for the future.

1. From vocational education at the beginning of the activities of the Higher School of Commerce in Poznań to the status of the University of Economics and Business in Poznań

The 90 year jubilee inauguration of the academic year makes one reflect not only upon nearly a century of the university's history but also recall some thoughts formulated in those times, particularly those which – according to good practices declared today – have never lost their significance.

On 12 October 1926 at the ceremony inaugurating the academic year in the Higher School of Commerce in Poznań (HSC), a predecessor of the University of Economics, then the director of the School, Leonard Glabisz, said:

The HSC is to educate our future traders, in the broadest sense of this word, training their intelligence, decision, initiative, will, sound judgment, which are the virtues they need to win in the struggle with everyday life that becomes more and more complicated”, adding that: “ education [...] cannot be based upon a slavish imitation of the professional practice ,[...] it means preparing the students for rational understanding and recognition of the acts and phenomena of commercial life, furthermore it means chiselling fundamental laws and methods out of practice [...]. Therefore, in our school education must stand in the foreground, followed by scientific inquiry in the background [...]. We will make every effort not to complicate science, the approach to science and the way of teaching it [...] it is necessary to maintain a direct contact with facts, to be influenced by facts and consider them in their entire reality (Tasks and the programme of work at the HSC, 1926).

Analyzing the sense of L. Glabisz's message one may ask: is the education of economists understood in this way still valid today? Can the concept of education in the Higher School of Commerce be useful after 90 years? Do we, who continue our predecessors' work at the beginning of the 21st century, understand the core of the university of economics in a different, perhaps better, way? Do we have more effective prescriptions for executing the mission and objectives of the university of economics? Reflective answers to those questions should become the premises for modelling the education of today's and tomorrow's students in the current and anticipated realities of social practice.

Worth mentioning is a surprising similarity of certain priorities presented by engineer Eugeniusz Kwiatkowski, the Minister of Industry and Commerce, at the opening ceremony of the new building of the Wielkopolska Chamber of Commerce and Industry in Poznań in 1926, referring to the current situation. E. Kwiatkowski underlined that:

The whole nation for its own sake has to settle down to creative everyday economic work with unabated energy. If there exist considerable natural differences in the

political or social areas between various groups and parties, then we should most harmoniously unite the efforts of all citizens in the economic area, [...] even if for the moment we would like to march separately (Jeziorański, 1996).⁶

He also pointed out the key foundations in building our country's prosperity, recognizing the main ones as follows⁷:

1. Stability of economic conditions reflected in a stable value of money, equilibrium of the state budget and a „surplus” of social income over consumption.
2. Cooperation and natural economic compensation in Europe on the principles of the equivalence of concessions because individual sanitization and the functioning of individual states cannot lead to the complete and satisfactory result.
3. „Flourishing agriculture whose level in the whole country should be raised to the level achieved by the efforts of farmers from Poznańskie and Pomorze” as a way to stimulate the internal market for industrial goods, overcoming the crisis of unemployment and restraining the “export of the most powerful human force from Poland”.
4. Exploitation of Poland's coal mining capacities and industry, as well as a full use of the production capacities of workshops, leading to price decrease; creating favourable conditions for the development of crafts and small household industry as a lever of wealth and national welfare.
5. Revision of general trade and production costs, rampant after the war, reorganization of the state apparatus and availability of cheaper credits, tax regrouping, closing down unprofitable plants which make use of artificial assistance of the state or excessive customs protection.
6. Development of trade, so far neglected, overcoming its atomization and orientation towards intermediation in the chain of foreign intermediaries taking a considerable part of the profits; and obviously the development of sea trade.
7. Unification and amendment of economic legislation to facilitate self-acting adaptation of the activity of entities.

After several decades of development and valuable achievements confirmed by high performance in the sphere of scientific research and education thanks to the ambition of the University authorities and its community the former Higher School of Commerce, later the Academy of Commerce, the Higher School of Economics and finally the Academy of Economics, obtained the name and the status of the University of Economics by the act of 2008 passed by the Sejm of the Republic of Poland.

⁶ As Jan Nowak-Jeziorański wrote: “Kwiatkowski made history as a founder of Gdynia but this definition considerably narrows his role. He rescued and strengthened the country's economic independence without which Poland would not have been able to survive as an independent state” (1996).

⁷ Government plans for the economic sphere. From the speech of the Minister of Commerce and Industry at the jubilee ceremony of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry in Poznań, *The Poznań Daily*, 1926, No.38, p.12.

It is interesting how E. Kwiatkowski's priorities of 1932 would be presented at today's inaugurating ceremony by his counterpart in Poland's government. This interest results mainly from the fact that the government's priorities exert an influence on the functioning of the entire higher education and every university in Poland. Moreover it is significant how those priorities are related to the mission and whether they will influence the integrity as assessed through the prism of the components of PRESTIGE (to be discussed later) of the University of Economics and Business in Poznań (UE & BP).

If – as an old maxim says – „history is the teacher of life”, it is worth tracing how it was in the old days and draw some conclusions for the future from those observations. Although, according to the motto from the third report of the Club of Rome, “in order to survive we must learn from the future, not from yesterday (Meadows, Meadows, Jørgen Randers, & Behrens III, 1972).

2. Integrity of the university

Whenever I pronounce the word „university”, I do it with some solemnity. Little has been changed by a time-lapse of 45 years since, as a student, I became a member of the academic community for the first time. The main reason for this is not the academic tradition or due respect to the generations of academicians but always the idea of the university. The idea which constitutes its social function in “*the collective existence of contemporary humanity and its multiple nations*” (Twardowski, 1933)⁸. As the over-riding obligation of the university professor Kazimierz Twardowski recognized revealing the truth, estimating scientific probabilities and fostering skills of their recognition. He wrote about the following:

Therefore, the core and kernel of university work is scholarly work, both as regards contents and methodology. [...] Out of those efforts there emerges an edifice of scientific knowledge, the objective knowledge which calls for its recognition exclusively on the grounds of being justified by the laws of logic, which imposes itself upon a human mind only by an irresistible force of arguments. This fact emphasizes the objective character of scientific research which does not take orders from any external factors and does not wish to serve any side purposes but recognizes experience and reasoning as its only masters [...]. Indeed, serving this purpose the University radiates dignity bestowed upon it by the immense importance of the function it fulfills (Twardowski, 1933).

⁸The author was inspired to use the category of integrity (dignity) by Kazimierz Twardowski's considerations, formulated in his inaugural lecture entitled “On dignity of the university,” delivered on 21 November 1932 at the University of Jan Kazimierz in Lvov, on the occasion of the honoris causa doctorate being conferred on him by the Poznań University (1933).

Today universities express and symbolically codify their integrity, taking into account the contemporary context (Henkel, 2005; Sławek, 2012; Szadkowski, 2015). For example, the integrity of the UE & BP is defined in a formalized way by an acronym of the word PRESTIŻ (PRESTIGE) which (when spelled in Polish) represents seven values which are of supreme importance for the academic community: P – stands for truth, R – for reliability, E – means effectiveness, S – respect, T – represents transparency I – innovativeness and Ż – friendliness. Using such symbols to shape the attitudes of the community is embedded in the mainstream of socio-techniques. If this technique is to be effective, the values constituting the system must take roots, first of all in people's awareness, speaking colloquially "in the hearts and minds" as well as in the attitudes of employees, a friendly attitude to students and elucidated understanding of all stakeholders of the university. Wherein an attitude is understood as a developed inclination (an act of will manifested in action) to react in a socially specified way, particularly by undertaking definite activities in response to social expectations. Realization of such PRESTIGE in everyday life of the University which I call dignity (integrity), after professor Twardowski, requires both a critical analysis of the past and a rational projection of the future.

The PRESTIGE of the UE & BP also imposes a duty to avoid everything that could harm its integrity or even create some possibility of yielding to any influence which has nothing in common with the objectivism of science. This, amongst others, means the preservation of an appropriate distance between the university and the stream of life around its walls, the clamour of conflicting social, political and especially economic trends.

To preserve the virtue of dignity, the University must remain unmoved like:

A lighthouse showing sailors the way both when the weather is favorable and when a storm breaks out.

3. Stages of change in educating economists in Poland⁹

The confrontation of how the core of the university of economics as presented in the speech of the first HSC director in 1926, compares with the lofty ideal of the university formulated by prof. K. Twardowski in 1932 and, finally, with the institutionally declared system of this University in the second decade of the 21st century, exposes diversities on the one hand and variations of the concept and practice of the university's functioning on the other. Moreover from the secular perspective it shows changes occurring in Polish universities of economics based on the example of one institution.

⁹ The presentation of changes in the years 1945–1948 was based on the publication (Szambelańczyk & Wierzbicki, 1986).

From the perspective of 90 years of our University's history the education of economists was subject to many profound changes. The position of economic sciences changed as well. The systemic context in which the above mentioned thoughts were formulated differ significantly from Poland's reality today. In this reality there are incomparably more institutions of higher education, many more academic teachers and students, and nearly all the universities have the status of state schools of higher education. The market of educational services has developed. The status of a professor has been considerably devalued and the status of a student or a university degree holder has become common. The mentor – disciple relationships are to a large extent replaced by mass education procedures. Multiple channels of access to knowledge and ways of obtaining the qualifications necessary on the contemporary labour market exist, especially in the short term.

The inter-war period, occupation and the years 1945–1948

In the inter-war period the education of economists, diversified in respect of the programme and organization, referred largely to foreign experiences and exposed the demands of economic practice. This was emphasized by professor L. Glabisz in his speech of 1926. The occupation of Poland was a critical disturbance of that process. After 1945, when universities and faculties of economics were reactivated on the basis of the pre-war system, professors had full freedom in choosing the contents and methods of education and, similarly to the times before 1939, much importance was attached to the needs of practice. At the Poznań University, no fields of study were differentiated and the functional commerce-related profile was consistently developed.

The period of 6-year plan

As the years went by, the external interference in the functioning of universities, not only those of economics, became more and more visible, contributing from 1948 to changes and inconsistencies in the teaching content, deepened by differentiation in the beliefs and social and political attitudes of academic teachers. Gradually the central system of planning and management exerted a more and more important influence on the education and position of economists in the country's economy, which was most clearly visible in the period of the 6-year plan. The years 1951–1956 were characterized by the reformation of the universities and educational system according to a uniform pattern for all state schools of economics where the solutions applied in the Soviet Union were extensively taken into account. In that period the specialization structure of education was very unstable with a clearly visible tendency towards its fragmentation. This happened in agreement with the concept of education, typical of the centralized system of economic planning and management, which was to meet the needs of practice requiring university graduates to be ready to perform defined office-administrative duties in the field of a given specializa-

tion. Moreover apart from regular daily studies, studies for working persons were established and they developed considerably, becoming no less popular than full time studies, although only for a short time. The latter bore the signs of pre-commercialization in the university education of economists.

The strictly centralized system of economic planning and management extant then limited the significance of economic laws, led to a disrespectful attitude to economists and, in consequence, to an underestimation of the real function of economic education. In such conditions the role of the university was reduced to teaching functions with narrow practical profiles, which did not promote the scientific development of the personnel. The situation began to improve after the year 1954 which witnessed some relaxation of the departmental supervision over university activity and that created good conditions to restrict narrow practical specializations and reduce an excessive number of subjects and examinations so far obligatory for the students. There is no doubt that in this period it would have been difficult to find the characteristics typical of the classical dignity of the university in the institutions of higher education for economists.

Years 1957–1969

In the years 1957–1969 attempts were made to reactivate the academic status of schools of economics with a fairly autonomously shaped model of education, based upon the acts referring to the institutions of higher education, the first one of which was passed in the Polish People's Republic. This, unfortunately, ended with a return to the pattern uniformly applicable and binding for all universities of economics.

Changes occurring in Poland after 1956 allowed for substantial changes in the model of the education of economists, particularly as regards content, form and organization of the educational process, with a clearly visible reference to the period before 1950. The narrow practical specializations were abandoned and the plans of studies gained a flexible character. Educational specializations were to find their reflection in master's seminars and specialized lectures which could be selected by the students from the list approved by faculty councils. This created a possibility to combine the teaching process with scientific research carried out by the academic teachers conducting the seminars and specialization-related lectures. The most important thing, however, was a complete reform of educational programmes. In that period economic qualifications gained in status in the eyes of the public, which in fact contributed to an improvement in the quality of candidates for economic studies. This was influenced by the first attempt made then to reform the economic system, which was commonly regarded as very important. It was accompanied by the attempts to regain the scientific status of the academic staff and to revitalize the outward integrity of the university.

In the years 1957–1958 the centralized system of planning and management was strengthened and this caused more and more intense pressure from decision makers and politicians on individual systems of economic education, independently developed by the universities. The aim of that pressure was not to allow those systems to consolidate. The institutionalized manifestation of the pressure was a centralized determination of the plans of studies along with a definition of teaching specializations at individual universities, a recruitment limits for particular specializations, strict unification of the principles of admission to universities. This was accompanied by a replacement of election of the university and faculty authorities by nominations. It is difficult not to define those steps as a shattering blow to the initial stage of regaining the traditional position held by the academic schools of economics. Due to this fact the integrity of the university acquired a solely superficial character.

Years 1970–1981

The years 1970–1981 were a period of „rationalizing” the centralized system of economic education, which was reflected by the participation of intercollegiate teams in the preparation of ministerial solutions. The reform of economic education of the year 1973 was prepared over a fairly long time and was based on well-designed foundations. Unfortunately, its assumptions were not fully accomplished in practice. The reason for that was quite frequently the particular interests of the persons representing individual disciplines and their ambitions to gradually increase the number of fields of study and specializations. Along with the modernization of teaching, as the changes introduced were generally called, attempts were made at a scientific activation of the students (Orczyk & Szambelańczyk, 1986).

Years 1981–1989

The last stage of education within the frameworks of the Polish People’s Republic was virtually finished in 1981 with the implementation of the economic reform initiated by the act on enterprises, followed by the reform of the educational system commenced by the new act on higher education passed in 1982. This, however, did not lead to any substantial change either in the external conditions in which the universities functioned and to which the model of economic education had to be adapted, or to any significant change in the elements of that model. There was no agreement as to what type of an economist was most suitable to the social demand under centrally and a less systemically reformed economy, which in itself gave some freedom to the realization of the educational process. Worth emphasizing is the reform of the financing of scientific research in the central and departmental programmes of basic research, which stimulated the integration of researchers from various centres or types

of universities [Orczyk & Szambelańczyk, 1986]. Unfortunately this activity, so advantageous to the idea of the university, was weakened in the mid-1980s by personal changes of the coordinators of numerous central programmes, especially in the area of social sciences.

Systemic transformation after 1990¹⁰

The „golden age” of public interest in economic education started after 1989. This was formally related to the processes of economic transformation and, as regards the substance, with the restoration of the appropriate significance and position to economic categories in the socio-economic system. Liberalization of the economy and education caused a rapid growth of demand for economic studies (including economics, finance, accounting, management). As a result new educational institutions were established absorbing, in various forms, the personnel of state universities and practitioners (sometimes hardly acquainted with the new ways and conditions of economic life). Besides at the turn of the millennium the process of mass education at a higher level was characteristic [Trow, 2005]. Functional flexibility of professional and teaching qualifications was fostered. Additionally the growing demand was promoted by the period of demographic boom. However state universities and economic faculties lost some of their employees who took attractive jobs in outside .

The system of function of economic universities and the finance of their research before the breakthrough of 1989 contributed to the fact that the nearly revolutionary rapidity of changes was not accompanied by more substantial achievements of scholars dealing with the processes of economic transformation from the command-distribution regime to the market system. This seems to be fairly natural, although the case of Leszek Balcerowicz and his team may inspire a deeper reflection over this problem, as may the fate of the concept of economic reform promoted by Władysław Baka in the 1980s (2004; 2007). As a consequence of this the processes of transformation much more frequently took place by imitation or adaptation from the practice of market economies than by implementing the original concepts worked out at home, especially at the micro level. This could also be observed in the education of economists. The effect of imitation was particularly visible in educational programmes and their content. This tendency may be illustrated by the fact that examples used to support the content of lectures came first of all from the practices of foreign enterprises or organizations and much more rarely from home entities depending upon them. Moreover side by side with an avalanche in the increase of the new legislative solutions, many subjects taught during economic studies just reported those solutions, rather rarely presenting a critical approach which simply was not always able to keep up with changes enacted so frequently.

¹⁰This part of the text is based, amongst others, on the study by J. Szambelańczyk (2007).

Introducing profiles into the structure of education according to the fields of study and specializations under a relatively extensive programme-related autonomy of the university usually reflected particular interests of persons or groups of people, which led to the so-called “battle of didactics”. The situation was complicated by changes in the demand for specialists, too fast as compared with the passivity of the educational system. Moreover the problem lay in a progressive drop in demand for economists caused by the saturation of the labour market with graduates from economic faculties on the one hand and, on the other - by a smaller number of candidates for studies which resulted mostly from demographic decline. In such conditions the way to increase, or sometimes only to maintain, the necessary teaching load for the academic teachers employed was sought in offering new specializations, potentially attractive on the educational market. At the same time the flexibility of qualifications, so typical of the early transformation period, substantially decreased. It seems that at the public universities this was rather a reactive strategy, imitating the activities of non-public schools which tried to raise their attractiveness by quick organizational reactions to the emerging needs, even those of a niche character. Without any big risk of making an error it may be said that a considerable part of such offers was based on applying the newly developing standards of practice rather than on the results of studies or on expert knowledge supported by profound research and experience. Such strategic reactions did not foster the university’s integrity. Nevertheless it is difficult to contradict that they were, and still are, institutionally and personally effective, at least in the short term.

In the 1990s the implementation of the triad “science-didactics-upbringing”, officially promoted especially in the 1970s, disappeared from the policy of higher education institutions. Under a high demand for economic education in the form of intramural, and even more often extramural, studies the didactic function – being mainly an imitation or a selective transfer of foreign approaches – pushed scientific research into the background. The third component of the above mentioned triad – upbringing – was ousted, at least in the institutional dimension. All this did not really improve the integrity of the universities of economics, although it facilitated the tightening of their relations with decision makers and advisory or supervisory boards, fostering the development of expert functions performed by the lecturers and their cooperation with economic entities. The priority of didactics over research was stimulated, amongst others, by the commercialization of the schools of higher education and by the fact that a substantial part of the staff was oriented towards the maximization of income from teaching performed extensively in one or more schools. Taking extra jobs outside the university in the form of employment, economic activity or consulting services became fairly popular. This was an autonomous channel of integration between practice and didactics but was not always connected with maintaining the high academic level of the university.

The absence of appropriate studies makes it impossible to formulate categorical assessments but the easily observable features show considerable quantitative disproportions between those who were extensively involved in didactics in various forms of schooling and those who integrated practice with didactics, with a substantial quantitative dominance of the former. The foreign exchange of both academic teachers and students was also intensified. Modern means of electronic communications allowed for a quicker contact with foreign publications and sources of information. An unsatisfactory rate of scientific development of the personnel led to the intensification of regulatory pressure and disciplinary measures for mobilizing for scientific activity. This resulted in measurable quantitative results (especially as regards doctoral and post-doctoral promotions), differing, however, in qualitative terms.

A spontaneous growth of economic education in schools of various types, the liberal attitude of the state and cases of abusing public trust in educational institutions conducting higher level studies, contributed to the establishment of state and social certification bodies (e.g. State Accreditation Committee, Association of Management Education) which mainly controlled the didactic infrastructure and formal compliance with the standards. However by virtue of their activities they were not able to monitor the quality of teaching and its effects, especially the so-called external effects of education. On the sidelines it is worth mentioning that in the process of „mass production” and standardization of graduates, close relations between a lecturer and a student in the master and disciple relationship were playing a less and less important role although not only for those reasons.

A structurally important change in the education of economists was the implementation of the so-called Bologna Process (Pechar, 2012). The division of studies into first and second degree with the assumption of horizontal mobility, offering the bachelor's degree graduates an opportunity to change the profile of education, caused serious problems with the coordination of educational programmes, particularly as regards the sequence of subjects and corresponding contents. Those problems especially concerned a different level of knowledge amongst the candidates for studies, depending not only on what discipline they studied before but also on the schools from which they obtained their diplomas.

A rapid growth in the indicator of scholarization during the systemic transformation in Poland naturally increased the number of secondary school graduates applying for economic studies, which initially caused the increase of employment and excess of the teaching load. On the other hand, the limitation of the interest in economic studies, especially extramural, generated the risk of maintaining personnel resources in public universities, or even their growth, being mainly the result of the teaching load. This had a direct impact on the lowering of selection standards, both in the process of recruitment and in the course of studies, the more so that a rich offer of economic studies in the evening or extramural system and its exploitation almost completely drained

the potential for older cohorts of the candidates to undertake education. After the year 1990 also the demand for doctoral studies assumed the shape of an inverted letter “U”. At the same time the conjunctural character of that demand (particularly around the year 2000) and its size substantially reduced the elitism of those studies.

A specific symptom of the commercialization of education – of unusual character – is the practice (quite common nowadays) of employing, frequently on a full-time basis, the students of intramural studies, even those in the lower years of study. Such behaviour of employers is responsible for the fact that the students not only limit their participation in the classes provided by the programme but also compare the contents of their education with their current duties in a given post and in this way evaluate their usefulness, thus neglecting the aspects of advancement and appropriate qualification requirements in the perspective of their whole professional career¹¹.

Conclusions and postulates

These reflections presented in the form of a humanistic discourse make it possible to formulate a few conclusions and organizational postulates. First of all it is worth mentioning that interpretations of the sense attributed to university education of economists and changes in that education should take into account both – how they are perceived by individuals and by the public. These changes are not only and exclusively the real organizational systems but also inter-subjective sets of events in the network of relationships between people and the society (Kwiek, 2015).

Fortunately, so far, Peter Drucker’s projections about the twilight of universities by the year 2030, due to their anachronism and dysfunctionality in the civilized environment, have not come true. Other researchers representing critical trends as regards the contemporary academic culture (e.g. Matts Alvesson, Hugh Willmott, Henry Giroux, Marek Kwiek, Łukasz Sułkowski), do not forecast the disappearance of universities but point out the reasons for their crisis, mainly due to (Sułkowski, 2016):

¹¹ This situation calls for serious reflection, both on the part of the universities and the employers who hire students because such practice -related perception of the role of education at universities of economics constitutes a premise for verification of the concept of their integrity, especially the relationship between professional qualifications and the requirements of the workplace in economic practice. Paradoxically the practices presented may be interpreted as favourable for the university because practice -related qualifications usually have a short period of usability and this may generate the demand for education in people obtaining new or updating their former professional qualifications, not only in accordance with the concept of “lifelong learning”. Nevertheless in the light of the popular paradigm of the knowledge-based economy it is difficult to qualify the approach presented as being based on wisdom: otherwise it would be fearful to think of the alternative.

- commercialization of academic institutions,
- mass access to higher education and a drop in the level of education,
- marketization of universities in accordance with the concept of public governance,
- erosion of the ethos of classical learning,
- abandonment of elitism in education of intellectuals and creators for the sake of “production”,
- narrowly profiled specialists,
- elimination of humanities from education and the sphere of research,
- depreciation of the idea of authorial, critical-reflective education and replacing it with standard didactic procedures aimed at defined final effects.

In the secular approach the development of education of economists in Poland has no characteristics of natural evolution, changing rather discreetly under the impact of external factors and circumstances. The analysis of this process reveals almost cyclical changes consisting of the transition from „practicism” and narrow specializations to economic meta-skills within the frameworks of broad disciplines or profiles of education.

Studying the profession of an economist from the perspective of ninety years one may observe a quite clear discrepancy in the area of requirements to be satisfied by a model graduate and the requirements placed before him/her by the economic practice. Until the beginning of the 1990s this discrepancy had been similar to divergences between the theory of socialist economy and economic practice in the Polish People’s Republic. In the period of transformation the lack of examples and experience in respect of the transition from the command-distribution system to the market economy promoted education according to the paradigms derived mainly from well-developed market economies taking no account of transformation specificity.

In Poland the autonomy of numerous schools and universities of economics, diverse in resources and dispersed territorially, operating under various financing regimes (public versus non-public), with a limited resource of candidates for study and the lack of an honest verification of the quality of graduates’ qualifications, leads to market competition (on price and quality) based upon the lower standards of selection (pre-selection of graduates from the schools which end with a secondary school certificate, marginal or non-existent recruitment selection, necessity of adapting the level of teaching to the perception of an average student, preferences of the major part of students and employers for the narrow practice) based influence on the programme of studies.

From the beginning of transformation in Poland changes in the system and economic conditions, as well as preferences and choices of the public, generated a high demand for economic education and economic personnel. The dynamics of those processes disturbed the possibility for a reliable external verification of the effectiveness of studies. However many symptoms indicate that some activities of both the universities of economics and a broadly understood

environment led, and are still leading to, the fact that qualifications of the graduates¹² do not fully correspond to the formally declared educational effects.

When identifying cases of the highest standards of achievement of students and PhD students (not only at the national level), it is impossible not to notice that the mass character of economic education has dominated elitism, whilst the technology of the teaching process and priority of the didactic function over the cognitive function contributed to the erosion of the classical integrity of the Polish universities of economics in the period of the post-transformation educational boom. Regardless of the formal symbolism this erosion reduced their role as academic institutions and made them similar to vocational schools of higher education. An important determinant of that process was the commercialization of education, or even more broadly – of the universities of economics.

Calculating the costs and benefits, it was difficult – at least on a mass scale – not to use the opportunity which emerged thanks to the systemic reform and requirements of society and economic practice for economic qualifications. To accuse such a policy of myopia would be a simplification. Discounting the periodical effect created by transformation in Poland has, by its nature, a different dimension for particular age groups of practitioners or theoreticians of economics, including also academic teachers at universities of economics. Apart from individual attitudes and behaviours on the labour market in the period when the systemic opportunity emerged, it was important in which phase of their life cycle the given individuals were. Some had a much shorter, others longer career horizon and, therefore, different possibilities to take advantage of that opportunity. This is also a contribution to the contextual integrity of the university.

Assuming that in the foreseeable future the systemic conditions will be continued, or at least rejecting the assumption that changes will be of revolutionary character, the successive age groups of the lecturers in economics, if they want to retain, or even raise their social status and professional position, they will have to modify the priorities, restore the academic character of the universities of economics and shape the modified paradigm of the university's integrity able to meet the civilization changes of the 21st century in the globalized or "renationalized world" (Antonowicz, 2015; Esterman & Claeys-Kulik, 2016).

The confirmation of the above assessments should be a determinant for the urgent initiation of the processes for the rationalization of economic education, e.g. by a selective consolidation of material and human resources and the liquidation of the entities which do not meet standards which have been verified honestly and reliably. This problem is of crucial significance not only for the

¹² It is particularly difficult to offer new specializations when scientific achievements of the teaching staff are not supported by appropriate, well-grounded professional qualifications, including scientific research and didactic infrastructure (e.g. verified programmes and plans of study, experience of the staff, teaching aids).

long-term reason of the state but it also involves a serious political risk connected with unfulfilled aspirations of thousands of graduates, especially those who by a big effort of their own or their family incurred substantial costs to obtain a diploma and whose investment turned out to be unprofitable.

The processes of mass access to higher education of economists are not only specific to the Polish universities. Unfortunately they frequently signify a symbolic disappearance of the university's integrity and a transformation of the process of studies into the production of graduates with a flexible assortment profile in the "school-factory" (Estermann & Claeys-Kulik, 2016). The professional usefulness of such graduates, similarly to that of modern household products, degrades quickly. This dramatic comparison should raise awareness that the practices of manufacturers stimulating the demand for their products by their short shelf life must not be transferred to the processes of education.

If universities give up the function of a sorter who divides students, according to their abilities, knowledge and skills, into those who are able to overcome intellectual obstacles or solve certain specific problems, and those who are not able to do that, they will lose the social reason for existence and the diplomas obtained by graduates will lose their value, acting to the detriment of the image and credibility of their issuer.

And what comes next?

Taking into account the historical perspective a reflection over the process of university education of economists makes it possible to construct a matrix for modelling the characteristics of this institution in the near and more distant future (Leja, 2015). In the process of rational coordination, a wide circle of stakeholders should wisely locate the preferred solutions between:

- academic orientation and business orientation,
- confidence resulting from the social capital and supervision based on bureaucratic procedures,
- elitism of the academic staff and students versus egalitarianism of access to the process of education, research and studying,
- collegiality in the management of the university and managing of one-person bodies,
- limitation of bureaucracy and a controlled development of adhocracy,
- petrification of the structures and processes and innovativeness of activity,
- internationalization of quality in the academic community and use of quality control,
- promotion of criticism and praise of conformity inside and outside the university,
- ethos of the researcher and industrialization of research,

- internationalization and mobility of the staff and students versus localism and immobility of the university family,
- rewarding erudition of the masters and shaping expert specialization,
- finally, orientation towards the public good (or simply the common good) and egoism of the private good.

The impact of globalization on the processes of education at a higher level, although significant, is not identical in individual countries or even universities (Antonowicz, 2015; Sabour, 2015). Taking into account the structural-organizational complexity of a university, multi-faculty universities in particular, the choices in respect of the criteria specified above may be diverse, referring on the one hand to the external conditions and on the other to the specificity of substance, quality, or resources of particular basic organizational units (Siegel & Waldman, 2004). The differentiation may also concern the fields of study or specializations. This is connected with the organizational culture of the university (Tuchman & Wannabe, 2009).

Finally, I shall refer to the question of an almost Utopian character, contained in the title of the lecture: is it still possible to cultivate a university of economics which functions in the aura of integrity ? Unfortunately, much, or perhaps everything, indicates just the opposite (Kwiek, 2016; Thieme, 2009), and although generally transformations of academic cultures are multi-directional and complex, one can share the opinion expressed by Łukasz Sułkowski (2016) that nowadays “we observe the final dismantling of the Utopia of classical academic culture” which is changing to resemble the culture of corporations operating in the market economy (Giroux & Myrasiades, 2001; Readings, 1996). Therefore in the zeal to rationalize and reform the university structures it is critically important not to lose the humanistic value of science and higher education as the mainstays of *universitas*.

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