

MARKETISATION OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN THE FACE OF CHANGEABILITY OF THE LABOUR MARKET

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Summary. The study is a reflection on the effectiveness of marketisation of higher education in the area of preparing future graduates to function in the realities of dynamic changes in the labour market. The offer of universities should be adapted to the needs of the labour market, which is constantly changing. Attention should be paid to the need for cooperation between the labour market and the education market, because only such a relationship seems to bring measurable benefits to the individual, the complementary education and work system.

URYNKOWIENIE KSZTAŁCENIA WYŻSZEGO WOBEC ZMIENNOŚCI RYNKU PRACY

Słowa kluczowe: edukacja wyższa, absolwent, rynek pracy

Streszczenie. Opracowanie stanowi refleksję na temat efektywności urynkowania szkolnictwa wyższego w obszarze przygotowania przyszłych absolwentów do funkcjonowania w realiach dynamicznych zmian rynku pracy. Oferta uczelni wyższych powinna być dostosowana do zapotrzebowania rynku pracy, który permanentnie się zmienia. Należy zwrócić uwagę na potrzebę współpracy rynku pracy z rynkiem edukacji, gdyż tylko taka relacja wydaje się przynieść wymierne korzyści dla jednostki i wzajemnie uzupełniającego się systemu edukacji i pracy.

Introduction

The contemporary, demanding labour market forces future graduates to constantly improve themselves, preferably in various fields at the same time. It requires flexibility, dynamism, mobility and creativity. The individual must accept this and try to meet the requirements of today's permanently changing labour market. In the current situation, it is extremely important to discuss the functioning of the modern labour market – especially in the context of the role that young people play in this market. Such discussions should take place among legislators, representatives of the labour market, employers, representatives of the Ministry of Education, as well as among and with the participation of the interested parties – students and graduates. The role of the university in this regard seems to be of key importance in the context of preparing future graduates for their future professional roles as well as entering the labour market.

The education in Poland “requires intensive corrective actions, especially since it is one of the most important sectors of social life. Market regulations, supply and demand law, mass youth rush for university diplomas over the past two decades have done their part”¹. Mass university education has led to a surplus in many areas, which currently causes big problems for young people to find themselves in the realities of a demanding job market. Retraining and improving new skills is the basis for acquiring new professional roles and at the same time functioning in them. Higher education should be available, but not universal.

Higher education from the perspective of changes

The educational boom of the early nineties, connected with the increase of society's educational aspirations and increased access to general high schools, and in the longer perspective – higher education, which began to develop dynamically also in the non-public education sector, caused a change in the educational preferences of young people. In a short time, the percentage of people with higher education increased significantly. Opportunities were created to “market” education by depriving the state of its monopoly position in the creation of universities and launching paid university studies at public universities. Extending

¹ *Ku strategii rozwoju szkolnictwa wyższego w Polsce*, [w:] strona <http://liberte.pl/strategii-rozwoju-szkolnictwa-wyzszego-polsce/#> (25.02.2018).

the education stage by the period of higher education postponed the real participation of young people in the labour market, including their real share in the growing unemployment². Currently, as Melosik Z. writes, “The teaching objectives are no longer considered in the context of creating an educated man, but in the context of the needs of the labour market”³.

Every person faces – sooner or later – the need to plan their educational and professional future. For some it is a conscious choice; the decisions of others are often ruled by chance. Very often, young people leaving the walls of the university do not know the labour market and the requirements of employers to potential employees. The beginning of the 21st century is characterised by a huge increase in the number of universities in Poland, extension of the educational offer and easier access of high school graduates to continue their education both in full-time and extramural studies. The number of university students and graduates with higher education is increasing. This process is accompanied by increasingly higher requirements, expectations and ambitions of young people. The effect of the impressive increase in the number of students in Poland is the increased interest of this group of young people to take up paid work, not only short-term, not requiring high qualifications, but more often long-term, consistent with education; work that will be part of their future career. Smooth entry into the labour market immediately after leaving school is a serious challenge in the situation of significant unemployment among this age group⁴. This is not a typically Polish problem, because in all European Union countries, young people are in a worse position on the labour market than people in other age categories. This situation, in connection with the intense changes brought by the modern labour market, sets new requirements for young people.

Modern times expect and require from the education system new challenges in the area of young generation education, the generation “of tomorrow”, which set the course for all socio-economic changes but also set trends, among others, on the education and labour market, at the same time will be the creator of these areas. Today, education must adapt but also follow the rapid changes that are taking place “here and now”, of which we are witnesses but also perpetrators.

² M. Piorunek, *Poradnictwo kariery w sektorze szkolnictwa zawodowego – refleksje – dylematy – pytania*, „Kultura-społeczeństwo-edukacja” 2016, nr 2, s. 48.

³ Z. Melosik, *Kultura popularna i tożsamość młodzieży*, Impuls, Kraków 2013, s. 34.

⁴ A. Kicior, *Problemy zatrudnienia absolwentów szkół wyższych*, „Edukacja” 2007, nr 3, s. 15, szerzej na temat: J. Pelekh, D. Kukla, *System wartości pracownika a jego miejsce na współczesnym rynku pracy*, Uniwersytet w Równym, Ukraina, 2019, s. 43–51.

Analysing the specific situation that is currently taking place on the higher education market, it is worth pointing out the specific transformations that are taking place in that market and the challenges related to them faced by young people in the context of planning their educational and professional future. The following selected changes can be indicated, among others⁵:

1. Diversity and flexibility of the educational offer of universities – contemporary higher education is becoming more and more diverse – students can benefit from many different forms of education offered by various institutions of higher education. More often education takes the form of modular systems. More and more universities create greater flexibility for students in the selection of content and forms of classes. Such changes are, of course, a positive effect of the universities' efforts to meet the requirements of the labour market and the expectations of students. On the one hand, they create an opportunity to choose subjects consistent with the interests of students, as well as, very importantly, with the expectations of employers. On the other hand, they can pose some additional complications for students. In order to make a rational choice of study program, one should be guided by the knowledge of one's own interests and possibilities, as well as goals and professional plans.
2. Marketisation of education and increase in the enrolment rate – in recent times, access to higher education is definitely easier, which is associated with an increase in the enrolment rate. There are more and more university graduates; the market is becoming more saturated. In this context, therefore, graduates very often have to deal with high competition on the labour market, and the mere possession of a university diploma ceases to be their bargaining power. The marketisation of higher education may contribute to the flexibility of education, but on the other hand it may go hand in hand with a decrease in the quality of education. In addition, it is conducive to the situation in which access to education becomes simple even for people who do not show adequate skills or commitment.

⁵ Por. m.in. R. Sultana, *Strategie usług poradnictwa zawodowego w społeczeństwie wiedzy – europejskie trendy, działania i wyzwania. Raport CEDEFOP*, Wyd. Cedefop. Biuro oficjalnych Publikacji Unii Europejskiej, Luksemburg 2004, s. 70–71. Tu autor niniejszego opracowania dokonuje rozwinięcia i aktualizacji wybranych zmian.

This, in turn, may result in lower employer confidence in the value of higher education⁶.

3. New opportunities for the development of educational and professional careers – as shown above, contemporary students and graduates should take advantage of various opportunities to acquire competences valued on the labour market in order to become attractive candidates. Due to the high competition on the labour market, it might seem that this task is not the easiest one. On the other hand, however, the specific diversity of the educational offer and marketisation of education (which favours competition between universities) mean that universities offer many different development opportunities for students – from training, workshops, cooperation with local business, through a wide offer of exchanges and trips abroad.

In addition, it is worth pointing out that the contemporary opportunities that students can use cause a situation where student migrations are becoming more frequent and more common (e.g. as part of internships or student exchanges). Contemporary higher education should therefore be geared to the specific needs of students planning trips abroad or from such returning trips⁷.

It should also be emphasized that at present (at least due to the greater availability of higher education offers of varying quality, a larger number of students, international migrations, etc.) students and graduates are an increasingly diverse group – in terms of age, experience, needs, aspirations, approaches to work and study⁸, as well as in terms of expectations of the educational offer of higher education. Studies constitute the highest stage of education, which is the culmination of preparation for professional work and independent life.

As emphasized in the Poland 2025 Report, the modern economy needs people who are educated carefully and in a modern way, conceptual, able to easily adapt to a changing environment. Increasingly, a person must be prepared to take up work in the conditions of rapid changes in specialisation and professions resulting, among others, from the rapid development of technical knowledge

⁶ Szerzej na temat: D. Piróg, *Absolwenci szkół wyższych na rynku pracy w warunkach kryzysu*, „Przedsiębiorczość – Edukacja” 2013, nr 9, s. 310.

⁷ Szerzej na temat poradnictwa międzykulturowego m.in.: B.J. Ertelt, J. Górna, G. Sikorski, *Brain Drain – Brain Gain*, AJD, HdBA, Bonn – Częstochowa 2010, s. 81–87.

⁸ Szerzej m.in. *Pierwsze Kroki na rynku pracy. Międzynarodowe badanie studentów i absolwentów*, Raport Deloitte, Katedra rozwoju kapitału ludzkiego SGH w Warszawie 2013 s. 9–10, http://www2.deloitte.com/content/dam/Deloitte/pl/Documents/Reports/pl_Deloitte_PierwszeKrokiNaRynkuPracy_2013_1.pdf (01.08.2015).

and technology, the ongoing processes of internationalisation and globalisation of the economy that lead to increased competition.⁹ Universities should focus more on transferring and creating skills for independent operation, shaping the ability to be entrepreneurial, teach quick adaptation to changing conditions and ways of dynamic action in the realities of continuous socio-economic changes.

In the Strategy for the development of higher education in Poland, we read that the offer of “universities should be tailored to the needs of the labour market, as well as to the diverse educational aspirations of people graduating from upper secondary schools and subsequent degrees of study. It is proposed to depart from the top-down fields of study and replace them with diploma programs that will be independently designed by universities. High quality will be provided by a strengthened program and university accreditation system, linked to the scientific research evaluation system. Depending on the type of implemented diploma programs and the proportion between research and teaching activities, the following types of universities will be distinguished: academic colleges, vocational colleges and academic colleges as well as research colleges. Instead of part-time studies, it is proposed to introduce extended studies for students who, due to employment or health conditions, cannot cope with standard studies.

The university’s openness to the social and economic environment should serve to continually adapt education programs to the needs of the labour market, as well as to transfer knowledge and innovation between universities and enterprises”¹⁰.

The history and assumptions of the functioning of Harvard fit perfectly for this reflections. Harvard gained his “reputation, not because the state gave him a lot of money or someone wrote a wise law on promoting the best US universities. Harvard has become synonymous with quality in higher education because after the Civil War it was the first university to adapt to the needs of a dynamically developing society. [...] Students were allowed to choose a significant part of subjects, new, practical faculties were introduced, and the research program was developed. Today, Harvard has become a model for most American universities that make up the world’s leading universities. Polish universities need as radical a reform as Harvard in nineteenth-century America. Poles are a completely

⁹ Raport Polska 2025. Długookresowa Strategia Trwałego i Zrównoważonego Rozwoju, Rada Ministrów, Warszawa 2000, s. 48.

¹⁰ *Strategia rozwoju szkolnictwa wyższego w Polsce do 2020 roku – drugi wariant*. Raport częściowy przygotowany przez konsorcjum: Ernst & Young Business Advisory. Instytut Badań nad Gospodarką Rynkową 2010, s. 5.

different society today than they were 20 years ago, but our universities have changed little and are becoming far from reality”¹¹.

However, it is difficult to state unequivocally that universities should only prepare for work. Their task is also to expand general knowledge about the world. Hence, learning outcomes should not ‘outperform’ other goals, and their best solution is compatibility. Universities, what should be clearly emphasised, are not able to prepare units perfectly for work, because the working environments themselves are changing too quickly. They are primarily intended to provide such knowledge and skills that in the future will increase employability, and thus shape future employees. The theory that young people acquire for many years within the walls of the university is certainly an element necessary to perform a specific profession, but must go hand in hand with apprenticeships or contacts with the world of employers. Globalisation forces the education process to change towards innovative education that would overcome the bad habits of schematic teaching. Schools must set new goals for themselves. It is not the news and skills that determine success, but the right attitude. “Universities should be more open to their economic environment. [...] If the structure of education differs significantly from the structure of employment, the needs of the economy and the demand for specific qualifications or professions, then there is a dysfunction and irrationality of these structures”¹². Polish universities in the structure in which they currently operate are not able to keep up with the needs of the labour market¹³. Higher education shows a lower dynamics of adaptation changes than the labour market. The young generation is therefore a qualitatively new intellectual capital of society¹⁴.

The current socio-economic reality, a difficult process of entering the labour market and maintaining a once-occupied professional position, are conducive to building mosaic, unique and non-linear professional careers that go beyond common patterns and patterns¹⁵. Socio-economic and cultural trends determine the reality of the modern labour market but also shape the consciousness of the

¹¹ P. Dobrowolski, *Ile są warte studia w Polsce*, „Wprost” 2009, nr 40, s. 32, <https://www.wprost.pl/togodnik/172877/Ile-sa-warte-studia-w-Polsce.html> (20.02.2019).

¹² U. Jeruszka, *Efektywność kształcenia w szkołach wyższych*, „Polityka społeczna” 2011, nr 1, s. 2–3.

¹³ Tamże, s. 3.

¹⁴ B. Galas, *Młodzi po zmianie. Wartości i orientacje życiowe Polaków*, „Nowa Szkoła” 2011, nr 10, s. 19–20.

¹⁵ M. Piorunek, *Kariera zawodowa w ponowoczesnej rzeczywistości. Nowy paradygmat i jego edukacyjno-pomocowe implikacje*, [w:] J. Matejek, K. Białożył, (red.), *Praca w życiu człowieka i jej społeczno-edukacyjne uwarunkowania*, Scriptum, Kraków 2015, s. 19.

individual. There are three groups of factors that create the contemporary labour market¹⁶ and affect the process of taking future graduates from education to the labour market:

- economic factors that primarily result from changes in the global economy and related changes in business management,
- technological factors that are associated with broadly understood technical progress. The technological revolution is a source of development of sectors in which dominates the share of knowledge, which increases the demand for highly qualified employees. In addition, innovations cause a situation in which the qualifications held by employees quickly become outdated, as a result of which it is necessary to place greater emphasis on training and developing their skills throughout the entire development and career (the concept of lifelong learning). In addition, widespread availability and low cost of using various mobile devices contribute to the suspension of the possibility of working remotely, which is a source of change for both employees and employers,
- demographic and social factors, which include, among others, aging of the society, and thus the prolongation of activeness in the labour market, greater social awareness of employees, spatial mobility of people, better education and broadly understood world changes affecting the building of attitudes towards work contemporary work ethos¹⁷.

The tendencies outlined above have an impact on the shape of the modern education and labour market. The dynamics of the modern job world means that we are often forced to make difficult professional decisions. Current technological progress causes rapid changes in trends on the labour market. A certain group of professions become professions of the past and another one – of the future.

At this stage of consideration, it should be stated that universities perform many important social functions, while on the contemporary labour market they have two roles – as an entity creating the economy and as an institution preparing graduates (future employees) to participate and function in the labour market.

¹⁶ Por. szerzej A. Grycuk, *Najważniejsze tendencje na rynku pracy w krajach rozwiniętych*, „Studia BAS” 2013, nr 4 (36), s. 9–25.

¹⁷ Ibidem. Por też: D. Kukla, *Efektywność edukacji wyższej wobec turbulentności rynku pracy*, „Szkoła-Zawód-Praca” 2017, nr 14, s. 25–37.

Conclusion

Summing up the above considerations, it should be emphasised that the situation of future university graduates on the labour market is complex. Young people cannot stop at educating themselves in one direction, but they have to combine many skills, be aware of continuous improvement, and be ready to change jobs and the profession. If the school is to prepare an employee to work in conditions that meet the assumptions and requirements of the European Union economy, then to meet the challenges of the market, it should be remembered that quality standards are not only legal regulation, but also a customer requirement. This is a huge task for education, especially higher education.

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