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TRANSFORMATION OF UNIVERSITY EDUCATION. FROM THE PRINCIPLE OF REASON TO THE PRINCIPLE OF THE MARKET

Abstract

Some ideological trends in higher education global discourse, and practical changes in higher education institutions that occur in countries participating in Bologna process, are leading to decreasing the quality of teaching and learning in many fields of university studies. In this paper an attempt is made to characterize the quality of higher education as a subjective or inter-subjective construct referring to the effectiveness and usefulness of the educational process. Also, some aspects of the marketisation of universities (in particular some of its underlying reasons and consequences) are discussed in the last part of the paper.

Keywords: idea of university, entrepreneurial university, quality of higher education, marketisation of universities

THE CHANGING IDEA OF THE UNIVERSITY

The idea of the university has been evolving from its very beginnings in the Middle Ages, but in the last two-three decades it has become subject to radical changes. This is taking place on a global scale, although of course not everywhere at the same rate and in the same form. It is mostly visible in European Union (and associated) countries, which are realizing programmes and activities established on the international regional level (known as the Bologna process), aimed at

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formally organizing and ideologically justifying the quantitative and qualitative changes taking places in universities. In particular, these changes consist in positioning universities as only one of many higher education institutions (HEIs) – the educational activity of universities is at present dissolving in the sea of HEIs’ activities aiming at satisfy the increasing (allegedly) economic demands for highly qualified specialists and, connected therewith, the increasing educational needs in modern societies. As a result, the changing social role of the university is accompanied by an ideological justification based on projected economic growth and comprehensive social and cultural progress. Different definitions of such a new social role of the university may be reduced to the concept of the “entrepreneurial university” – a kind of empirical model defining the direction of changes in two basic parts of university functioning: educating and conducting scientific research. This paper is critically focused on the former element.

The concept of an entrepreneurial university glides over the important problem of the sham nature and superfluousness of mass education on the higher level, which is leading to a decrease in the quality of education in many fields of study. One of reasons for this is the difficulty in defining the quality of teaching and learning in the new environment, in contradiction not only to the old idea of a university but also to some of the basic social functions of higher education.

Ronald Barnett claims in his latest book that the idea of the university has been limited ideologically, spatially and ethically. Ideologically, because the contemporary university is officially encouraged to realize only its narrow economic and financial interests (in the service of the “knowledge economy”). In the spatial dimension the university is forced to be engaged in its direct environment, in particular to have relations with industrial or business organizations, and its students are increasingly “local”. The university has also become hermetically closed ethically, because is concentrated mainly on its own interests. Unprofitable faculties, such as linguistics, philosophy, chemistry or physics, are closed down because their closure serves the university’s interests. The public (social) interest is either re-defined to suit this context or passed over altogether. Barnett suggests that all these trends are connected with the concept of the “entrepreneurial university”,¹ one of the main directions in the development

¹ The core characteristics of developing mechanisms of the entrepreneurial university concept can be found in the book by Kamila Biały: “Przemiany współczesnego uniwersytetu – od idei von Humboldta do modelu uczelni przedsiębiorczej” (“Transformations of the contemporary university – from the von Humboldt idea to the model of an entrepreneurial higher school”) [Biały 2011: 30–40].

of the contemporary idea of an university, which has been forming for some time and now has become dominant [Barnett 2013: 2–3].

At one time the idea of the university was associated with a specific structure of values, including some axioms. Barnett notes that:

A university offered a social space for rigorous and disinterested inquiry, for a collective search for truth (however that might be understood and successively redefined), for an insistence that those inquiries be conducted according to publicly attested standards, and a sense that such a collective inquiry was personally and socially edifying, assisting personal development and the growth of public reason and understanding in society. Such a set of assumptions was accompanied with a belief in the value both of institutional autonomy and academic freedom, as concomitants of and as a safeguard of this idea of the university. And it is just this ‘value background’ [...] that has come under severe pressure over the past three decades or so, and around the world [Barnett 2013: 53].

This pressure has been generalized and expressed in the concept of the ‘entrepreneurial’ university, which contains some particular elements; such as being of an innovative character, the generation of income, and the taking of some risks. Such a university becomes a market institution striving to identify and project services and products suitable for its ‘clients’ on different markets, and not only within the educational sphere. In the contemporary educational ideology it has become an accepted norm that:

such a university might try to develop a niche for itself in the provision of short courses, in the leisure and hospitality industry (even establishing quasi-hotels on campus), in consultancy services or in the exploitation of its research work, and in the setting up of so-called ‘spin-out’ companies [Barnett 2013: 78–79].

Barnett suggests that the idea of the entrepreneurial university should be treated as pernicious for three reasons, which correspond to the three ontological levels of social existence according to the model proposed by Roy Bhaskar [Bhaskar 2011].

Firstly, at the empirical, directly observable level, this idea manifests itself in the ‘busyness or super-activity’ that is demanded by the university from itself. All material and human resources should be perceived as being efficient, effective, and ready and able to provide the potential client with the demanded or expected services. Thus:

The entrepreneurial university has no spaces for rest, for contemplation, for quiet reading and introspection. [...] is a calculative machine, continually scrutinizing its units, its activities and its staff to ensure – in each of its devolved ‘cost centres’ – that they are fully ‘productive’, generating income for the university [Barnett 2013: 82].

Secondly, at the level of perceiving the actual conditions of their functioning, universities accept a competitive attitude as a dominant characteristic.

Far from understanding themselves to constitute a national or even a worldwide collective of universities, each university seeks to gain competitive advantage, a stance aided by the increasing number of worldwide league tables of universities [Barnett 2013: 82–83].

Thirdly, at the deepest level of their institutional existence, the acceptance of these characteristics and of being an ‘entrepreneurial university’ bring about a kind of “seismic displacement”. From its medieval beginnings the university was constituted on the principle of reason (in its philosophical view), but at present it has become constituted on the principle of impact. This principle is construed quite narrowly: the university’s impact on beauty in the world, civilization progress, empathy, culture or individual and social well-being is no longer part of the equation, nor are the possible transformations of students’ internal lives and minds taken into account. The principle of ‘impact’ has a purely economic basis and is linked with other new principles of universities’ functioning, all of them focusing on the university’s concern for the impact of its performance on its own economic well-being.

The idea of the university thus moves away, little by little and step by step, from the interest in reason, in critical dialogue and in understanding without economic benefits.

Universities are not to be judged by the extent to which they open communicative spaces for reflection and debate, as a space of reason in their own right, nor by the ways in which they might open intellectual spaces for asking and pursuing fundamental and penetrating issues of humanity. This is not to say that these activities cannot be found; but it is to point to the dominant ethos at work. With its linkages to reward structures – material and financial – this ethos, in which considerations of space, beauty, empathy and liberty become otiose, subtly and powerfully comes to re-position universities [Barnett 2013: 83].

According to this general approach it seems that tertiary (higher) education should realize the following social functions: (1) transmission of culture, the creation of cultural capital; (2) transmission of knowledge from defined scientific fields; (3) positioning in the social structure (stratification function); (4) training and distributive function; (5) developing innovation abilities; (6) introduction to an occupational career of a given kind; (7) preparing to enter and function on the labour market; and (8) implementing basic and applied scientific research findings.

In Europe, including also in Poland, in recent years the discourse related to reforming higher education and to its future in general have manifestly brought two functions from the above list to the fore: the function of preparing students

to enter and operate on the labour market; and the function of implementing those scientific research findings useful for the economic sphere of social life. Other functions are treated mostly as ancillary or subordinated to these two. This phenomenon is accompanied by the rapid disappearance of the autotelic motivation for studying, which may be treated as an effect of the narrow perception of higher education tasks, i.e., limiting educational discourse to the applied and ancillary perspective of HEIs' functioning.

The above-mentioned ideological trends and practical changes in HEIs' (including universities) way of functioning have occurred mainly within European (and thus Polish) HEIs, under the influence of the understanding of the Bologna process as an institutionalized and formalized reform in the area of higher education, as well as an ideology justifying such activity. However, analysis of relations within the economic (especially financial) reality of universities, their functioning in the scientific and teaching/learning spheres, and their ideological superstructure decidedly goes beyond the scope of this paper.

THE QUALITY OF HIGHER EDUCATION AS AN IDEOLOGICALLY– CONDITIONED THEORETICAL CONCEPT

In this paper, almost all the problems related to the situation and functioning of HEIs in general, and of universities in particular, are focused on the concept and the implementation of quality in education. An attempt is made to conceptualize the quality of education from an operational perspective, as resulting from subjective construction processes relating to education's effectiveness and usefulness. 'Effectiveness' is understood as the level of attainment of educational objectives related to the social functions of education; and 'usefulness' is defined as the benefits of realization of these functions to individuals and groups [Boczkowski 2009]. Effectiveness and usefulness, when treated as aspects of the quality of education, are placed in an evaluative context consisting of: the objectives of higher education; social actors interested in higher education and their expectations; the normative sphere (with respect to problems associated with higher education); as well as the areas, directions and methods of assessment.

Quality, and therefore the quality of education, can be understood in different ways and this is reflected in the literature of the subject [see Frazer 1992; Skrzypek 1999; Hornowska 2004; Boczkowski 2011; Strategia rozwoju 2009]. The abundance of definitions and approaches to quality reflects the relativisation of this concept with respect to the persons or social subjects (actors) employing

it. This relativity of the notion of quality is reflected in the interesting definition of Anna Krajewska:

Quality is defined by the amount of features characterizing an object, product, or activity which are significant in reference to the values approved by the user of the term [Krajewska 2004: 26].

Thus the quality of education is a complex, multidimensional construct: the construction of a skeleton or general scheme, and then filling it in with content within the field of social interactions, being the subject of educational discourse. Different social actors participate in this process through the realisation of their own interests, defined with reference to an educational ideology.² In connection with these assumptions the following theses might be formulated.

1. The quality of education is produced and reproduced by different interested subjects.

2. There is no quality of education existing independently on its subjective or inter-subjective interpretations. It is always the product of these interpretations, a construct based on them.

3. Such a construct is not produced in a free method, but on the basis of or with the active participation of educational ideologies – presented, suggested, implemented or imposed in educational discourse.

In order to operationalize the possibilities, including the possibilities of ameliorating activity and empirical research, the most important issues in the quality of education are, firstly, the extent to which the educational activity meets its objectives; and secondly, the extent to which it realizes the expectations of actors interested in education (i.e. brings benefits to them).

The approach to the quality of education proposed here is therefore focused on two aspects of its quality: effectiveness and usefulness. These two aspects constitute the denotative core of the concept, and other aspects of quality are auxiliary or concomitant in relation to the dominant two, and constitute the connotative field of the notion of quality of education.

Constructing and reconstructing the quality of education by the social actors within the context of evaluation of the effectiveness and usefulness of education can be presented in a schematic way to more clearly show the specificity of the process. Three spheres influence the process of producing/constructing the quality of education:

² Educational ideology is understood here as a relatively fixed set of ideas (views, impressions, symbols, norms etc.) concerning the educational sphere of social life, being a justification for activities undertaken by a given social group or category to realize its interests.

- declared and realised educational objectives;
- characteristics of evaluating subjects – focused around the expectations addressed to the educational institution or educational cycle, with the crucial role played by the evaluative criteria accepted by the subject,
 - social spheres as the context of evaluation (assessment).

The quality of education can be interpreted as its effectiveness, i.e. the extent to which the educational objectives of a training facility, previously formulated on the basis of the needs and expectations of actors interested in education, are achieved. Most frequently there is also the question of whether certain professional skills are transferred, developed, modified and refreshed in a way that maximizes the satisfaction of particular actors. As satisfaction is a function of the benefits attained, perceived in relation to specific educational experiences, we are dealing here with another aspect of the quality of education – its usefulness. It is particularly important to keep in mind that these two aspects of education quality are mutually interrelated.

The assessment of the education quality conceived in such a way can be carried out in three complementary dimensions, or aspects. Firstly, by checking how much the consciousness of the participants in a learning process has been subjected to desirable (i.e. consistent with the objectives of education and/or expectations of the actors involved) changes as a result of this process. Secondly, through analysis of the positive and negative aspects of the professional careers of graduates, being results of an educational cycle completed by a given person, or are at least indirectly related to that cycle. Thirdly, the assessment of the effectiveness of education can be performed using evaluations, feelings, and opinions of graduates after the completion of their educational cycle. The first of these evaluations concerns the effectiveness of education, the second – its usefulness, while the third examines both the effectiveness and usefulness of education.

Educational objectives are generally indicated by an institution offering education or by a wider educational system, taking into account cultural patterns, the interests of the state, and the social expectations (expectations of social actors – including direct participants in the educational process and their families, expectations of groups of people pursuing the interests of the educational system, and the interests of academics, employers, etc). Usually one of these aspects (usually the expectations of the social actors) is dominant, while others are subordinate (or subordinated) using a more or less unique background or reference systems. One can also imagine a dynamic, varying hierarchy of interests and related expectations.

Social actors interested in education always expect benefits, which differ between different actors and are often conflicting or even mutually exclusive. The qualification of events or states as a benefit or non-benefit may be different in the context of perceived education effectiveness. What is a benefit for one social actor – independently of its level of effectiveness – for another may be an effective but useless realization of an educational objective.

The value may be, on one hand, the achievement of specific educational objective(s), and on the other the meeting of certain individual or collective expectations. In this context one can suggest a category of universal educational objectives, which should always be carried out regardless of the content and details of the educational process. These are changes (defined structurally, not generically) in the consciousness of the educated actor. If these changes were implemented sufficiently, the training could be regarded as effective, regardless of the generic characterization of the acquired knowledge and practical skills. An argument could be made that achievement of the universal educational objectives would make the educational process useful as well, in a similar universal dimension. Assessment of the effectiveness of an education should be performed in this context as well.

Both the goals and expectations may be formulated in terms of benefits. Moreover, regardless of its objectives (whether verbalized or not), education may bring some benefits, so the utility value of education should be taken into account regardless of whether it brings about, or doesn't bring out, the benefits of defined characteristics (expected or unexpected, foreseen or unforeseen, predicted or unpredicted). In order to determine the above, an assessment of an education's usefulness is made. Here, a category of the relative utility of education should be considered: some benefits (even those that are not seen as such in connection with the specific perceptual conditions of the interested actor) arise or may arise from the participation in the educational process itself. Training may therefore be perceived as useless, despite its established effectiveness and independently of the usefulness perceived by another actor according to other criteria.

An assessment of an education's effectiveness and usefulness is associated with "customer satisfaction", i.e. the degree or the scope of positive assessment of learning outcomes by particular interested actors. This assessment also concerns meeting the actors' expectations connected with the learning process, educational institution etc., generally formulated in terms of benefits. This assessment is made by taking into account the degree to which expectations are included in the declared goals of an educational institution (before selecting its kind or specific type of training), as well as the extent to which these goals are achieved (meeting

those expectations) during the educational cycle and as a result thereof. The issue of assessing the usefulness of an education comes into play as the main component of the satisfaction of an actor interested in education, if the issue of meeting expectations arises. Education is (was) useful if it brings (brought) benefits, that is, if events or states of things occurred as its result, and are (or were) perceived/experienced as benefits. Of course, this also entails benefits unrelated to the formal (official) education program.

THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION AS SATISFACTION FROM STUDYING

A particular point of view on what constitutes the essence of the quality of an education is frequently adopted: the satisfaction of the (subject) actor interested in education.

The satisfaction of a particular client is a quite sufficient criterion of quality in the case of manufacturing products or the provision of typical services, but this is not the case with respect to educational services. In this case the criteria of quality (understood as the degree or level of the actor(s)'satisfaction) may be different because of the need to meet the expectations of different actors interested in education. The "parameters" of these expectations would have to be determined *via* an arduous analyses, taking into account many social circumstances – cultural, administrative, political, economic, etc. Indeed, any social actor interested in education formulates – directly or indirectly – a set of expectations, and therefore certain requirements to be met by the educational system (or educational cycle). The expectations of various actors may be common and coincide, but they often differ greatly. Many of these expectations coincide in a more or less conscious manner, which accumulate and undergo some modification in the minds of the people directly involved in the educational process, and also secondarily affect other interested actors and thus are reflected in the expectations formulated by them towards training institutions.

However, one should bear in mind that the educational system (in particular, the system of tertiary education) gradually withdraws from shaping its participants' abilities to create, understand, or agree on the meanings connected with scientific and technological discoveries, new social theories, or ideas underlying them. Expectations and activities relating to the traditional idea of education – intellectual and personality shaping – are today disappearing, and even are being systematically removed from educational practice (for instance in the process of installing a National Qualification Framework in a higher education

area). Different social subjects (actors) participate in this practice – candidates and students, educational policy institutions and higher schools’ authorities. This is reflected in a segment of a press interview with a member of the management of one of the Polish state universities:

In the traditional approach the ‘quality’ is the high level of knowledge. If a graduate has a large amount of knowledge in a given field this is alleged to constitute a high level [of quality]. Meanwhile the philosophy of the new Higher Education Act emphasizes not knowledge, but skills and competences. [...] The student’s level of knowledge has become a side issue. His/her satisfaction is the most important thing. That is what the university should guarantee for each student. Strictly speaking, there is a question about the satisfaction of university graduates, and obtaining and keeping up a satisfying job is the source of it. [...] I am explaining [in this way] the meaning of the notion of ‘quality’ according to the new Higher Education Act and according to the Bologna process. [...] This quality does not mean advanced knowledge. The quality is the graduate’s satisfaction. The quality is to be happy. Of course, the university cannot be transformed into a factory of satisfied people, but first of all we must think about students in the same way a car factory thinks about its clients: upon leaving the car dealer they cannot regret their purchase (*Jakość to bycie szczęśliwym* 2012: 7).

THE MARKETISED UNIVERSITY

As one of the main social institutions, the economy comprises the whole set of social roles connected with production and distribution of goods and services and the fulfilment of human needs. From its very inception economics has sought to discover and to rationally elaborate the rules or laws governing the economy. But in reality the production and distribution of almost all goods and services are subordinated to market mechanisms, which are rational only from the point of view of producers and distributors, as is visible in the expanding field of creating consumers’ needs. This subordination – more and more frequently called “marketisation” – currently affects all spheres of social life, including the system of education, and particularly higher education institutions.

It’s obvious that producing and disseminating knowledge/skills/competences always has had, or may have, an economic aspect: academic research requires money, its results may or may not bring financial benefits. Maintaining an academic staff, material infrastructure, and equipment generate costs, and HEIs have incomes and expenses, and so on and so forth. The problem is whether and to what extent HEIs are market-independent producers and distributors of knowledge and skills/competencies; and also whether and to what extent their activity can

be reduced to “educational services”, with all the consequences resulting from the dominant role of the client (consumer) on the “educational market”.³

Another problem is that, in principle, the higher (tertiary) education is a part of a national educational system – the highest level of education after its primary and secondary levels – but in fact it is treated, i.e. governed, administered, and managed, as an autonomous societal system with its own mission, ideology, and policy. This autonomy is bringing about a separation from any coherent educational perspective which, in view of the weakness of (or the absence of) a national education policy and in view of the increasing demand for diplomas, has enabled an overwhelming and aggressive marketisation of HEIs, and in consequence is contributing to the total collapse of the idea of a university higher education.

The most visible collective symptom of this collapse arise from the indisputable facts of the massification of almost all types of higher education,⁴ and imparting them with mainly an instrumental character. Furthermore, the social fact is that collective consciousness and public discourse are shaped by the claims emerging on the basis of a mythologized educational ideology within the area of relations between the educational system and the situation of graduates on the labour market. At the same time, the symptoms of a labour market saturation as concerns relatively young people with tertiary education diplomas is becoming ever more clear, and employers are clearly articulating their needs for employees’ skills which, in general, have no cause-and-effect relationship with a higher education. The graduates are thus having difficulties with obtaining a job corresponding to their expectations, which by the way are shaped by an educational ideology.

Today every tenth graduate of Polish HEIs does not have a job [Drozdowicz-Bieć 2014], and even if a job has been found and already accepted – usually after an intensive job-search – very often it does not correspond with the formal qualifications and/or expectations of the graduates. Such a phenomenon, observed in other European countries as well, coexists with three important macro-social processes.

³ The problems surround the correctness of application of the client/consumer concept in the context of different education areas has been discussed in another place [Boczkowski 2011: 101–108].

⁴ Although the inflow of candidates to study in HEIs (particularly in non-stationary, tuition-based fields of study) has been declining in Poland in the last few years.

1. The popularization and mass scale of studying⁵ or, more precisely, of striving for diplomas. This is accompanied by an overwhelming, non-substantive, and passive instrumentalization of higher education: in the majority of cases students undertake study programmes not for their content nor even out of any interest in a particular field of knowledge, but with the aim of finding a satisfactory job after finishing their higher education cycle and setting themselves up well in life. Two paths aimed at achieving this aim seem to be most frequent: (a) gliding through the studies without doing any serious work, probably expending less intellectual effort, with the goal of obtaining a diploma which, *per se*, is supposed to be a pass to a satisfying career; and (b) demanding to be effectively taught some skills and competences (in fact it does not matter which ones, and better be taught in a practical way which does not require excessive mental effort), that can provide such a career.

2. In some countries there is a decreasing demand for the younger specialists with higher education and an increasing demand for the older employees with occupational/professional experience, and not always with an HEI diploma.⁶ This is probably the effect of limitations in the quantitative and structural absorption capacity of the labour market.

3. The economic and financial crisis, which started in 2008, quickly transformed, particularly in Europe, into a kind of civilization crisis. It must be underlined here that the global crisis has overlapped with the processes mentioned above, and has most probably created favourable conditions for their intensification.

The evolution of HEIs in the recent decades, and their present form, seems to reflect an attempt to react rationally to the instrumental motivations and expectations of those persons interested in a higher education. However, at the same time both the expectations addressed to the HEIs and their reactions are weakly connected with economic and labour market reality. This disconnect does not consist in their “lack of adaptation to needs or demands of the economy and

⁵ In the English language literature relating to tertiary education this phenomenon is sometimes referred to as “massification”. It seems that this notion has certain negative connotations related to unintended consequences of the sudden increase of the number of students at the tertiary level of the educational system [Teichler 1998; Guri-Rosenblit et al. 2007].

⁶ According to the data contained in the OECD report from 2009, Poland was in second place (after Sweden) among the countries in which such a trend was the strongest in the years 1998–2006. During this period the number of specialist jobs for younger people (24–35) having a tertiary education decreased in Poland by 11% [Education at a Glance, 2009: 31–35]. There are signs that this trend is still present in the Polish labour market.

labour market”, as is frequently stated in public debates, but in the impossibility for HEIs, in particular at universities, to fulfil the great part of the needs/demands expressed by the employers. As is sometimes asserted in the deepening sociological research, such needs/demands or expectations can be classified in four groups, as being related to: (1) personality or character traits, not to be acquired at an HEI; (2) obvious matters, such as knowledge or skills in a given field; (3) the arte-factual items formulated by social science theorists and popularized by the mass media in very simplified forms (creativity, soft skills); and (4) the structural and economic characteristics of the labour market (expectations or even demands for professional experience in a given field).

The main individual aim within the sphere of non-obligatory education, in particular at the tertiary level, is financial security in the future (i.e. in adult life), and only to a very small extent the realization of autotelic aspirations connected with functioning in the defined occupation. The graduate’s satisfaction, as was mentioned above in the interview with a university managing authority, is mainly of a financial nature. Only at farthest end of the pole does one find the mention of satisfaction related to the sphere of prestige or to autotelic participation in occupational space. This relatively small proportion of candidates, students and graduates having some autotelic motivations (and predispositions to learn at a higher level) is melting in face of the mass of individuals having only instrumental motivations, without appropriate intellectual preparation for studying. Poland’s quantitative educational success – over 1.4 million students with a net enrolment rate of about 40% – was possible only as a result of severe decreases of the demands on candidates and students. In fact, these quickly progressing negative processes, attributed in the everyday public discourse as symptoms of the decrease in the quality of higher education, have resulted, firstly, from the commercialization and mass participation in HEIs over and above any rational limits of academic staff efficiency, and secondly from the unsatisfactory functioning of the preceding levels of the educational system.

The general, collective aim, intended by both the European and Polish educational authorities, until recently was fulfilling the needs of a developing economy and labour market, which has always been one of the main premises of the Bologna process, but unfortunately only based on ideological reasons, without relation to the actual situation on the Polish and European labour markets. One can formulate a quite likely true hypothesis that the structural changes in the system of higher education also had, *inter alia*, an important political aim: to manage, with the help of HEIs, the mass of young people with previously aroused consumerist

ambitions, to move or spread over time their entrance to the unprepared labour market, despite the fact that other countries' experiences with the massification of tertiary education clearly showed the threats connected with this approach.

The situation within the sphere of higher education quality, which has many aspects, has been shaped multi-dimensionally and in a very complex way. As it seems, the quality of teaching and, in particular, of learning is declining as an effect of the massification of studying, especially at the social and humanist faculties which – being perceived as easier and less demanding than others – constituted a majority of the mass enrolment during the last two decades.⁷ As a matter of fact, even within that group of faculties one can observe a leaning towards those faculties having the reputation of being most easy to pass. One can say that for a considerable majority of candidates and students the quality, referring to scientific disciplines defining the contents of studies, does not constitute a criterion for choosing and continuing studies. The quality of education, understood as effectiveness and usefulness and referring only to aims and expectations connected with entering and functioning on the labour market, is however such a criterion.

However, it is difficult to attain a high quality of education, referring both to scientific disciplines and to functioning on the labour market, in the greater part of social sciences or humanist faculties. But what still remains is the quality of education understood as the satisfaction obtained through the secondary characteristics of studying. An informal aim of studying – although sometimes expressly put into words in HEIs' promotion materials – is the participation in student life, broadly understood as a sphere of entertainment, cultural expression, and emotional experiences. The satisfaction of this aim during studies (independently of even passive participation in the teaching/learning process) and the usefulness of this aspect of the studying period – in the sense of living up to expectations – might contribute to producing the students' perception of the quality of their education, understood quite uniquely but in accordance with theoretical assumptions. However, it must be noted that even within such a meaning, sustaining the high quality of education (or of studying) is more and more difficult to achieve. It seems that this is connected with the disappearance of the student subculture due to the commercialization, marketization and massification of tertiary education and with the ever more frequent engagement of students in part-time or even full-time jobs, even during full-time stationary

⁷ Over 50% of students in Poland study at faculties of social sciences, economics, law, pedagogy, humanities and art [Szkolnictwo wyższe w Polsce, 2013; Informacja o wynikach rekrutacji..., 2014].

studies. This suggests that in many cases studying or continuing studies is of an inert character, realizing the stereotype of the importance of higher education “just in case”, because this is universally accepted and “everybody is doing it” – according to the ideologically-saturated promotion of higher education as it appears in popular educational discourse.

The dominant educational ideology also influences the perception of the general objectives of higher education. In educational discourse some modifications and changes appear, initiating the process of moving from effectiveness and usefulness, understood and evaluated in the context of testing knowledge and skills in relation to the study discipline(s), toward evaluating the education almost solely in the context of “life practice” – in particular of financial success, which is less and less connected with intellectual, cultural, or occupational development. We have to deal with the educational pattern of the “(wo)man of the labour market”, subordinated ideologically to some utopian vision of a completely shaped, perfectly flexible worker/employee of an enterprise or an institution oriented to maximize profits and benefits. The main ideological premise here is the internalization of the supposed expectations of the employer. Educational attainments in this area should allegedly guarantee to the student/graduate satisfaction connected with his or her success on the labour market, and to the higher education institution/the educational system – maintenance of the *status quo* or even progress in the organizational and/or financial sense. This is a strongly ideological vision, clearly oriented towards the interests of the uniquely profiled “corporate” employer, as well as towards the interests of higher education institutions.

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Andrzej Boczkowski

TRANSFORMACJA KSZTAŁCENIA UNIWERSYTECKIEGO. OD ZASADY ROZUMU DO ZASADY RYNKU

Streszczenie

Niektóre tendencje ideologiczne w globalnym dyskursie edukacyjnym oraz faktyczne zmiany w szkolnictwie wyższym dokonujące się w krajach uczestniczących w procesie bolońskim prowadzą w szczególności do obniżania się jakości nauczania i uczenia się na licznych kierunkach studiów uniwersyteckich. W artykule podjęto próbę scharakteryzowania jakości kształcenia na poziomie wyższym jako zsubiektywizowanego konstruktów odnoszącego się do skuteczności i użyteczności procesu kształcenia. W ostatniej części artykułu omówione zostały niektóre aspekty urynkowania uniwersytetów (w tym niektóre jego przyczyny i konsekwencje).

Słowa kluczowe: idea uniwersytetu, uniwersytet przedsiębiorczy, jakość kształcenia na poziomie wyższym, urynkowanie wyższych uczelni