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Thoughts on the higher education system in Poland Changes – issues – evaluation Part 2

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Abstract: This report is a part of the results of the international project entitled "Studium in Osteuropa: Ausgewählte Aspekte (Analysen, Befunde)" conducted in the years 2013-2015 under supervision of Prof. Wilfried Schubarth and Dr Andreas Seidl from the Potsdam University, Department of Education Science, and Prof. Karsten Speck from the University of Oldenburg, Germany. The project was conducted jointly by representatives of academic centres from Germany, the Czech Republic, Poland and Russia. Its general aim was a comparative analysis of the effects of implementation of Bologna Process directives into the higher education systems of the individual countries. The changes introduced into the higher education systems in the countries involved in the project were described and evaluated, discussed was in particular the problems of education of teachers at the university level.

The following text is the result of the contribution of the Polish group participating in the project. The report will be presented in two parts. The first part is focused on the macro-societal context of transformations in the higher education system in Poland. The implementation of selected aspects of Bologna Process directives is described and supplemented by empirical comments. The second part deals with selected aspects of university level education of teachers, followed by a polemic against the assumptions and execution of the target transformations of higher education system.

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Education of teachers in Poland

Until the year 2006, the education of teachers in Poland was characterised by great diversity: studies at a vocational higher school, supplementary master's studies, a related master's study course as well as paedagogical post-graduate studies following a professional qualification certificate. The education to become a teacher was provided at special teacher education facilities: teacher colleges, including those for foreign languages, teachers' institutions, including those for preschoolers or for early primary school education as well as teachers, institutes for technical universities.

Irrespective of this great variety of the Polish education system, schools were always dominated by volume by teachers with university degrees. In the year 1992, for instance, 58.2% of teachers had university degrees. This value increased systematically year on year. In the year 2000, it was already 84.4%, reaching in 2009, at 97%, a value among the highest recorded in Europe (Bialecki 2003). Such an increase of the number of teachers with university degrees must be seen in concert with the education requirements of the Polish society that increased symptomatically in this period that provided higher education facilities with a massive flow of prospective students and leading to a change in the employment and remuneration system of teachers. The tendency towards a reduction of the numbers of teachers with secondary education certificates as well as graduates of teacher institutes and colleges continued in the subsequent period.

Presently, any teacher wishing to work in a school in Poland must provide proof of higher education facility graduation with paedagogical qualifications. This requirement is found in the provisions of laws on higher schools as well as the Polish act on the education system and in relevant regulations. The ordinance of the Polish Minister of Education and Higher education of June 13th, 2006., as a consequence of the obligations of the statement of Bologna as signed by Poland, additionally contributes to important changes to this situation. As is the case for other study facilities, the principle was also introduced into the education of teachers, according to which a comprehensive higher education course is replaced with two-tiered education¹. Thus, new standards of preparation for the profession of a teacher emerged. According to these standards, the education of teachers in Poland primarily takes place at higher education facilities, through a teachers'

¹ Rozporządzenie Ministra Nauki i Szkolnictwa Wyższego z dnia 13 czerwca 2006r. w sprawie nazw kierunków studiów / Ordinance of the Minister of Science and Higher Education of June 13th, on the names of fields of study, Polish Journal of Laws of 2006, no. 121, item no. 838.

study course, within the scope of a vocational school study course concluded with a licentiate (bachelor's degree) that initially foresaw two study course variants for teachers – a main course and an additional course – as well as within the scope of second-degree studies concluded with a master's degree that may be concluded both for a single major, as well as for two (Osiński 2011).

Important in this regard is the fact that teacher's studied must include the following courses: professional education in preparation for teaching of the primary school course (so-called Module I), paedagogical education preparing for tasks related to upbringing and social paedagogy (Module II), education on the principles of teaching (Module III) as well as optional education preparing for the teaching of a second course (Module IV) and education in special education (Module V). The implementation of modules II and III foresee a total of at least three semesters. The education for module IV is obligatory for teacher students that would like to teach more than one subject, and module V must be completed by students that want to be able to teach a specific course in preschools as well as special and integration schools².

The requirements included in the individual teacher education modules contain very precise descriptions of the competences of future teachers. The most important of these are:

- 1) professional competences;
- 2) competences in the area of professional teaching;
- 3) psychological competences and competences in terms of upbringing, including support for the social development of the pupil;
- 4) diagnostic competences, primarily in the area of proper planning and organisation of paedagogical diagnoses and the evaluation of pupil performance;
- 5) methodical competences supporting the development of pupils with special education needs;
- 6) social competences, in particular aimed at improving interpersonal communication as well as verbal and non-verbal behaviour in education situations;
- 7) competences permitting the evaluation of one's own education and skill level as well as the evaluation of the results of own work;
- 8) competences in the areas of vocal skills, work safety and hygiene;

² Rozporządzenie Ministra Nauki i Szkolnictwa Wyższego z dnia 17 stycznia 2012 r. w sprawie standardów kształcenia przygotowującego do wykonywania zawodu nauczyciela / Ordinance of the Minister of Science and Higher Education of January 17th, 2012., on the standards of education in preparation for the profession of teacher, Polish Journal of Laws, Warsaw, February 6th, 2012, PDF.

- 9) language competences in accordance to the norms approved by the Council of Europe concerning at least advanced-level skills in at least one foreign language;
- 10) competences permitting the effective use of modern information technologies in the teaching process.

During preparation ahead of execution of the position of teacher in Poland, as one can see, great importance is placed on the fact that future teachers should have as broad knowledge as possible in terms of education and psychology, developing these in the areas of their professional skills. It must be stressed that within the scope of educational preparation, particular value is placed on the skill to provide an interesting teaching experience and the individualisation of the learning process. The psychological and paedagogical part stresses the meaning of upbringing aid and care at the school as well as the necessity of organisation by the school and teachers of the community life.

Anyone wishing to become a teacher in Poland is required to conclude practical training during their education. This vocational training, through direct contact with schools and pupils, should permit one to get to know the specifics of the organisation and functioning of schools as well as to methodically refine their professional skills. Practical training is included in modules II, III, IV and V. The length of the training differs for the individual modules:

- Preparation in the field of psychology and education skills – 30 work hours,
- Preparation in the field of teaching methods – 120 work hours,
- Preparation in the field of teaching a further course – 60 work hours,
- Preparation in the field of special education – 120 work hours³.

It is obligatory for the first part of the training to serve the emergence of competences in the area of care and upbringing aid and to be completed in school day rooms, local centres as well as therapeutic pupil care centres. The second part serves the preparation of care for a group and the analysis of individual needs of pupils. It is only on the basis of these two levels of training that the third part, training teaching methods, may take place, in preparation to teach a specific subject. It is suggested to arrange one's practical training not exclusively during times when one does not study, as the burden of students by higher education courses and the training doesn't always permit reconciliation with the principles of mobility and the free arrangement of one's education (Osiński 2011).

³ Ibid.

The solution tried and tested by the faculty of humanities of the University of Zielona Góra can serve as an example of the organisation of practical teacher training within the scope of professional teacher education. Temporarily, two rules are in place concerning internships: The first, older rule, applies to students who have begun their studies before academic year 2012/2013, the second, new rules apply to students that commenced studying at a later date. The first rule foresees, over the entire study period of the first degree, two continuous four-week internships at a primary and a lower secondary school. This encompasses a total of 180 class hours. This includes 54 class hours that the student must conduct by themselves. The practical training at a primary school takes place following the second semester in September and spans 90 class hours, of which 25 are sit-in, observed hours (15 hours of the main course and 10 for the additional) and 27 that must be taught on one's own within the scope of the main course. Internship at the lower secondary school also takes place in September, however only after the 2nd semester. This also spans 90 work hours, of which 20 hours are sit-in time (10 hours for the main and 10 hours for the secondary course) and 27 class hours that must be conducted by the student, 17 in the main and 10 in the secondary course.

The second-degree study course includes an internship at a school above lower secondary school level, also taking place in September following the 2nd semester, and spanning a continuous period of two weeks with a total of 75 hours. During this period, the student must conclude the following:

- sit-in during five hours for the main course as well as the performance of 10 class hours;
- sit-in during 10 hours for the main and additional course (five each) as well as independent execution of 15 class hours, ten in the main course and five in the additional. The remaining internship time should be spent by the student, for instance, as follows:
 - participation in observation during breaks between classes;
 - studying documentation on teaching as well as the principles of documentation preparation (class register, education plan of the class, subdivision of the teaching material, evaluation tables and other documents);
 - getting to know the work of the head teacher, if possible through participation in parent-teacher meetings;
 - getting to know the work of the social paedagogue at the school;
 - getting to know the work of the paedagogical council and the parents' council, if possible, through participation in meetings;

- getting to know the forms of extracurricular activities available at the school and the work of pupil organisations;
- getting to know the work at and the contents of the school library⁴.

The indicated practical training need not necessarily be concluded in September, however in case of a different period, the student must file a relevant motion with the dean and get their consent.

The year 2013 saw new rules for student practical training introduced. Considered were in this regard all the directives of the ordinance of the Polish minister of science and higher education of 17.01.2012. on the education standards for the profession of teacher. According to these new rules, the first-degree studies at the faculty for humanities includes a teacher's internship of 30 hours at a primary school as preparation for the main teaching course. It is similar with the second-degree studies. In this case, practical training also spans 30 hours, however, should be done at a lower secondary or further school. In both cases, the students are to conclude their practical training alongside lectures at the university. The internship should primarily serve the perfecting of their sociopaedagogical and educational competences, especially in terms of individualised work with pupils and being able to lead a group.

The teaching internship should span for the first and second-degree studies a total of 120 hours each. During first-degree studies, the practical training is conducted at a primary school, during the second-degree studies, at a lower secondary school or further education institution. The key goal is the collection of experience in the area of work as a paedagogue and education specialist, and the confrontation of the knowledge gained on education and methods with school reality⁵. In terms of topics, practical training involves the following:

- 1) getting to know the specifics of a school;
- 2) observation of the way classes are conducted, especially the various modes of work, of communication with pupils, their encouragement and disciplining, the evaluation of the achieved results, the organisation of the dynamics and social atmosphere in class;
- 3) assisting and participation in planning and execution of a class;
- 4) performing the role of the teacher;
- 5) analysing and interpreting the observed or experienced paedagogical situations and events.

⁴ Regulamin przeprowadzania praktyk pedagogicznych na specjalizacji nauczycielskiej z dnia 18.03.2008 ze zmianami z dnia 27.01. i 17.03.2009 roku / Rules of execution of teacher internships in the teaching major of 18.03.2008 as amended on 27.01., and 17.03.2009, pdf.

⁵ Regulamin praktyk dydaktycznych na specjalizacji nauczycielskiej z dnia 12.02.2013 / Rules of execution of teacher internships in the teaching major of 12.02.2013., pdf.

Internship as teacher during first-degree studies takes place in two stages:

- 30 sit-in and teaching hours in the 4th semester, alongside university lectures;
- 90 hours (four weeks) in September in the 4th semester, of which 20 sit-in class hours and 25 hours of independent teaching. The students have at their disposal 50 hours to get to know the work of the school as a whole. During second-degree studies, internships take place at lower secondary schools, in the third semester alongside university lectures. They encompass a total of 60 sit-in and independent teaching hours. During the 4th semester, the students complete training of 60 hours at a selected facility further than lower secondary schools, e. g. at a general higher secondary school, technical school or vocational school. This spans both sit-in time as well as independent class teaching time.

At this point, it must be noted that against the backdrop of the quoted ministerial regulation that prescribes in great detail the scope and framework of preparation ahead of executing the work of a teacher, the models of theoretical and practical education of future teachers are almost identical at all Polish higher education facilities executing this task. The cause for this is that, contrary to most European countries, in which higher education facilities are getting more and more autonomy, the education of teachers in Poland continues to be very strongly centralised. The models and modes of education are determined centrally, and the upper education facilities with teacher faculties are obligated to apply the curricula and contents prescribed by ministers. This is substantiated by the objective of guaranteeing a unified minimum volume of requirements set for future teachers. For this reason, the Polish ministry for science and higher education prescribes in the disclosed regulation the norms of teacher education, general requirements, areas of competences as well as obligatory groups of courses for future teachers, and the related minimum time according to the curricula, determining which institutions are permitted to educate teachers and in what ways.

Critical thoughts on the education of teachers in Poland

The process of implementation for the reform of Bologna concerning teacher education in Poland is already taking many years. If one would consider the first analyses based on practical experiences as well as the first reservations, the conclusion is that just like the old system, the new system had not done away with the issues that had been raised for years. The model of teacher education designed by the ministry of education continues to raise many doubt. The ministry had described,

from their position, goals, norms as well as requirements concerning volumes and time, for the individual stages and types of teacher education. Curricula for the education courses such as psychology, paedagogy and education science were described in detail. In addition, the general goals were described for the individual courses that complement teacher education such as voice projection, education law including the organisation and functioning of the education system, security as well as first aid, the ethics of the teacher, language culture, regional history and culture, art and art science. Prof. Anna Wilkomirska stresses „that such a list of courses should be compiled by the teacher education facility depending on its abilities and the interests of students. To approach the matter in this way seems to be dubious solution. Due to the general formulations, it constitutes no form of aid for the authors of specific curricula. The contents thereof often raise material doubts, at times requiring clear opposition of academic teachers that perceive this as a limitation of their autonomy and as a vote of mistrust of their competences” (Wilkomirska 2005).

Of all the changes introduced in the last two decades of teacher education, especially within the scope of the Bologna process, the introduction of obligatory education in two courses during teachers' studies caused the most doubts and criticism. Criticised were in particular the curricular norms the foresee the introduction of this course already for the first degree (the baccalaureate). The time frame of the first study course stages are thus found to be too narrow for the standards defined by the ministry (Osiński 2011). Hence, when the Polish ministry of science and higher education did away with this idea in the ordinance of 2012., the reception was good. The basic principle changed – and the achievement of graduation as teacher in two courses or subjects became optional.

S. Włoch stresses, riding the wave of criticism of the changes introduced to the Polish teacher education that the education of teachers is dominated just like it used to be by hardly usable knowledge classified as if in drawers that is distributed across narrowly specialised fields. The lack of the connection between theory and practice remains in the new system just the way it was noticeable before. Across the entire period of education, reflections and competences in upbringing and communication of future teachers are still not sufficiently developed. Włoch believes that many young teachers – as indicated by their testimony – have enormous difficulties in feeling at home at schools and communicating with pupils, and they are unable to reach decisions, frequently not even having at their disposal the basics of theoretical and practical knowledge on upbringing (Włoch 2005).

Such insufficient preparation of graduates for their educational work and activities related to upbringing in the school thus constitute a most fundamental issue.

To this must be added the doubts concerning the period, volume and quality of the internships. The educational practical training should form an integral constituent component of every kind of vocational education, hence, an amendment of the teacher education programme is made up of it, and it should naturally be connected to the school reality (Osiński 2011). Hence, voiced have been comments that each internship should be preceded by a course of lectures in psychology, paedagogy and specialist education. This, however, is not the rule in curricula of teacher education in many universities in Poland.

The new model of teacher education of Poland is furthermore burdened by the accusation that the proportions between obligatory and optional classes for students are shattered, especially in the first stage of education, e. g. the first degree, baccalaureate studies. Hence, suggestions are beginning to be heeded to that education of teachers should be constructed differently, meaning – vocational education mainly in the first stage of studies (baccalaureate), and paedagogical preparation in conjunction with special vocational education at the second stage (master's). According to such suggestions, the future teacher would receive their graduation diploma in the selected professional field following the first-degree studies as well as their professional master's title in the field of paedagogy teacher following the second-degree studies (Osiński 2011). Hence, in order to obtain the required qualifications, a five-year study cycle would be necessary.

First empirical observations concerning the results of the teacher education model introduced in Poland according to the Bologna process indicate in addition that the preparation ahead of the position of teacher often does not fulfil in practice the standards described in the regulation of the ministry. The information collected in the year 2004 by the Polish institute of public opinion from teachers and headmasters have shown that higher education facilities do not arrange practical education correctly (Wilkomirska 2005). During studies, it is mainly professional knowledge in the taught field that is being conveyed, with methodical and paedagogical as well as psychological preparation remaining insufficient. The majority of those surveyed (61.7%) evaluated professional knowledge as very good or good, with vocational and practical preparation as insufficient and weak. The teachers confirmed that in course of their education the skills that they required for their work in schools were lacking. The contents of the psychologically-aimed courses were overly „theoretical” and did not reflect, contrary to expectations, the dependence and interrelations between the natural development of pupils and the processes of upbringing and education. As a result, young teachers had difficulty applying their knowledge when working with pupils. It was difficult for them to master specific challenges, including e. g. recognising the needs of pupils and the

individualisation of requirements, correctly planning, implementing, organising, controlling and evaluating processes of upbringing, as well as working with parents. It was stressed that the theoretical knowledge attained during the university lectures and exercises was not utilised during the practical education at the schools.

Preparation ahead of work at a school is negatively evaluated by the surveyed headmasters. In their views, the young teachers are not up to the task of handling issues of upbringing when working with pupils (55% of responses), have weak methodical education (33%), lack knowledge of the law on education (19.2%), have difficulty applying the knowledge gained during studies to their school activity (30%) (conf. Wilkomirska 2005). The surveyed indicated that the reason for this is the lack of a system of selection for the profession of teacher, the very varied level of teacher education between individual higher schools as well as the weakly constructed individual curricula.

It is also noted that on course of vocational preparation, deontological issues of teachers, meaning, questions of ethical norms as well as the factors governing the moral value of activities of teachers, remain untouched. The surveyed indicated the need to restructure the teacher education system in many areas, and to improve it:

- Stressed is the essence of increasing the volume of practical teacher training (31.6% of answers) and the class hours independently conducted by future teachers (50%).
- Required are altered principles of selection of candidate teachers (27.7% of headmaster responses).
- Indications have been made that „too many institutions deal with the education of teachers, this education is done in a manner that is varied and not always solid and robust, with the result being an excessive number of insufficiently educated teachers”. In this regard, experts suggest the introduction of a system of evaluation of the quality of teacher education through accreditation of study courses and the awarding of rights to educate teachers exclusively to large, renowned higher education facilities.
- Attention is turned to the inconsistent concept of the fusion of practical training with professional and paedagogical education. The expansion of the volume of time and the restructuring of internships is considered to be paramount, with differentiation in terms of the type of school, which the future teacher is preparing to work at.
- The statement has been made that higher schools ascribe only mediocre importance to a comprehensive general education, especially in areas such as personal culture, paedagogical culture, own development, transgression,

decision readiness, problem solving, coping with with issues of upbringing and education, the keenness to make decisions and awareness of responsibility. Stressed is also the fact that teachers are only able to find their way around the social and political reality with great difficulty, and that education courses for teachers often convey knowledge being limited use in a world of ever-changing values and modes of living.

The report of the Polish Supreme Audit Office also contains remarks on teacher education⁶. In it one may read that „in course of the introduction of new curricula, schools weren't provided with any support to solve issues of upbringing and education. The offer in terms of upbringing was not aimed at making the school comprehensive, but at making teachers participate in selected forms of further education. Moreover, school headmasters did not use the qualifications attained by the teachers within the scope of various forms of continued education and training” (Tabaszewska 2012). This means that continued and further education of teachers cannot be characterised as planned and being in accordance with the needs of the school, at least when it comes to professional advancement, against the backdrop of own interests of teachers or due to the offers of teacher continued education facilities, and – not in the least – due to the prices paid for training, studies or courses. For all these reasons, the notion is represented that in this area closer cooperation would be required by higher education facilities with lower-level education institutions.

Poland has neither certificates nor exams that would govern the admission to the profession of teacher. The student becomes a teacher with graduation from their studies and when they attain their first (baccalaureate) or second (master) diploma. Thus, three years are sufficient to become a fully-qualified teacher. Universities usually do not have any special requirements of candidates for teachers. In addition, no studies are made that would determine the suitability of a particular person for the profession of teacher. The sole condition of achieving a position at a school remains, just as in the past, the graduation diploma following a relevant higher education facility study course.

⁶ Planned inspection named *Organisation and financing of education and vocational training of teachers* (no. P/11/073), encompassing academic years 2009/2010 and 2010/2011. The inspectors visited 62 facilities in all, including the ministry of education, eight public further education facilities subordinate to voivodeship local governments, 23 administrative bodies and 23 public schools. The purpose of the Chamber was the evaluation of organisation and results of teacher education and further training as well as the correct use of the public resources provided for this purpose. (http://www.bibliotekako.pl/news.aid,1945,_Czy_nowyy_system_doskonalenia_nauczycieli_sprosta_wyzwaniom_stawianym_szkole_.html).

Each year, a large group of people formally qualified to teach leaves higher education facilities. This volume is more than sufficient for the needs of the education system concerning new teachers. The reality of the job market puts the teacher who only has a baccalaureate diploma in a situation that is becoming more and more difficult when it comes to finding employment. In this regard, one may not forget that no ministries (education, science and higher education) encompasses the needs of the education system. No statistics are kept concerning persons with teacher qualifications. It is for this reason that nobody actually knows how many people permitted to teach actually graduate from higher education facilities. For the education system, the teacher only 'arises' when they take the position of a teacher at a school, while the group functioning outside of the education system having formal qualifications to teach remains „unnoticed“.

Presently, there are approx. 660 thousand teachers professionally teaching, this is more than 10% of all teachers in Europe. Even if the number of teacher positions in the recent years has dropped, however, the number of pupils has been dropping considerably more quickly. This in turn leads to a proportional increase of the number of employed teachers. Irrespective of this, the number of pupils per teacher in Poland is one of the lowest in Europe.

The feminisation of the profession constitutes an issue, as is the case in most countries. 81% of all teachers in Poland are women. It must be added, however, that men much more often than women hold managing positions in education.

The professional group of Polish teachers is growing older, the average age is increasing. It must be stated in this regard that until the year 2008, the average age of a Polish teacher at retirement was markedly lower as was the case of representatives of other professions.

The remuneration of a Polish teacher remains a point of annoyance. If one would consider the absolute volume of remuneration in the „group of specialists“, then teachers make much less money than representatives of other professions. However, the Polish teacher works the least at school when compared to their colleagues from other European countries. 18 class hours as part of the so-called allotted time is the lowest value in the European Union.

The legal provisions altered with the reform of the year 1998 were supposed to create a mechanism of motivation so that the teachers would invest „in themselves“ to improve their qualifications, expand their knowledge and amend their professional skills, whereby experienced persons would support those beginning their careers in the art of paedagogy. In Poland, as was already stated, the teacher studies graduate – as compared to other European countries – is considered to be a completely educated teacher able to perform their tasks as part of the full

work time. Hence, new laws officially introduce into school practice a system of professional advancement. The promotions of teachers are accordingly based on four position categories, between which there are relative and large differences in remuneration. These are:

- nauczyciel stażysta („Beginner teacher”);
- nauczyciel kontraktowy („Contract teacher”);
- nauczyciel mianowany („Appointed teacher”);
- nauczyciel dyplomowany („Certified teacher”)⁷.

Presently, the remark is often made that the promotion and remuneration system introduced as part of the reform of the education system does not actually fulfil its tasks. The case here concerns a „reversed pyramid” of professional advancement, as the highest promotion level is achieved relatively early considering the entire professional career. More than half of all teachers in Poland have already reached their highest professional level, meaning that the achievement of this objective does not constitute any further motivation to continued professional development. This in turn influences the result of one’s work.

The paedagogical education of teachers seems to be that particular area of educational reality that is most strongly opposed to reforms despite attempts at qualitative changes. This fact is certainly related to the deeply rooted long-term tradition of academic-level education at higher education facilities. This tradition, through care for autonomy, reinforces the structural and programme pattern of functioning of universities. One of the most important postulations, and at the same time one of the key demands of academic circles has for years been the independence of scientific thought.

However, this frequently-praised independence leads to hermetic isolation of universities from the dynamically-changing reality that surrounds them. And the case is not rarely that this separation of science is a phenomenon influencing universities – and teacher education – negatively. The result is a frequently-emerging abyss between practice, with schools being an example thereof, and theory, the embodiment of which are, according to general opinion, exclusively higher schools and academic circles.

Naturally, in conjunction with academic structures aimed in such a way at permanence, one comes across the notion of a „state within a state”. The world of science is a world that functions according to its own laws and feels best when retreated to its own space. It permits no outside interference, however, seldom

⁷ Rozporządzenie MEN z dnia 01.03.2013r.w sprawie uzyskiwania stopni awansu zawodowego przez nauczycieli – Verordnung des Ministeriums für Volksbildung vom 01.03.2013 zur Erlangung beruflicher Beförderungsstufen durch Lehrer, poz. 393.

also attempts interventions directed to the outside. A valuable scientific thought born within a university much more often than not remains for ever within its walls. There arise periodic and relentless attempts at reaching to the outside with a progressive idea or a specific practical solution (through increasing numbers of publications, symposia and conferences), however, such activities seem to have limited influence. Conferences and symposia are almost exclusively meeting of representatives of so-called „scientific circles” and the published papers only rarely reach those (practitioners) who would be best suited as their recipients.

To conclude, it should be stressed that a material condition for high-quality education of teachers in Poland would be an increase of financial resources for their robust theoretical and practical vocational preparation. In addition, a return to the institution of practical schools, as places where one is able to attain professional and vocational skills, that had proven itself in the past, should be considered. Perhaps one should look to other countries to find interesting solutions, for instance, Germany, where a graduation certificate is not the same as the right to exercise a profession? One only gains such a right having concluded a trial employment period at a school and a test attempted and passed before a state commission. The takeover of such a solution might possibly lead to a stronger selection of teacher studies candidates, an improvement of education quality and at the same time to an improvement in the societal status of the profession of the teacher.

Discussion, critical remarks

In the process of implementation of changes to the higher education system, each stage heard (and hears) critical voices and doubts concerning the correctness of certain basics as well as the effects of continued implementation thereof. Furthermore, it must be stressed that the indicated controversial standpoints and remarks are selective (subjective selection and emphasis) and yet universal, e. g. they apply to the entire higher education system in our country and also apply to the education of teachers as it constitutes a subsystem of the higher education system described and analysed here. As evaluations, opinions and thoughts were presented concerning the education of teachers within the scope of earlier musings as well, only general thoughts will be included here.

I will quote here some selected statements:

“The Bologna Process opened the way to separation of teaching from research and led to an explosion on the education market, it commercialised, privatised and commodified higher education. This process is an unprecedented attempt at

unification of great systems of national education, and brings with itself a threat – the worst part of it all – of a suicide of higher schools. Nobody thinking right could believe that a three-year vocational higher school following studies is higher education, or even believe that two-year studies would be equivalent to five- or six-year master's studies that were the case hitherto" (Kwieciński 2006: 42-43).

"The introduction and implementation of changes in the European higher school area caused many controversies, and ever louder criticism was related to the crises seen in the world, the results of which were reductions of financial resources provided to education and science. Would Polish universities be able to reach the ranks of the ten best universities, the budgets of which exceed by many orders of magnitude the maintenance costs of all Polish universities put together?" (Hejnicka-Bezwińska 2011:18-19).

A report by Ernst & Young and partially a report from the chancellor conference indicate the weaknesses of the Polish higher education system that can be seen based on research concerning the social diagnosis. The formulated conclusions are, among others, its dispersion and weakness (the number of peripheral higher schools without full rights to award scientific titles, the teachers employed at many locations, the number of which did not translate to the increasing numbers of students). This was also amended by lacking financial resources by the state and limited financing of research and teaching, the breakdown of research, demographic changes that already led to reduced numbers of students. The situation of Polish students and their education caused no direct improvement of their changes on the job market. In addition, Polish science is also presented (conf. <http://www.krasp.org.pl/pl/strategia/strategia>; <http://www.nauka.gov.pl/finansowanie/fundusze-europejskie/program-operacyjny-kapital-ludzki/projekty-systemowe/strategia-rozwoju-sw-do-roku-2020>, <http://www.frp.org.pl/?page=strategia>, Malec 2011).

The introduction of the basics of the European higher education area caused and still causes ambivalent reactions of academia in Poland (the education market is attempting to challenge some of these weaknesses, conf. Piorunek / Werner 2011, Piorunek / Werner 2013, Piorunek 2012).

- The Commercialisation of the education market leads to a separation of research and teaching (conf. Kwieciński 2006). Specifically in cultural sciences (Poland prefers the term humanities) the interest of potential sponsors is not raised any more. Direct, tangible and immediate results are expected that are directly related to the economy.
- The introduction of the staged system instead of the five-year cycle frequently caused a false understanding of mobility. What follows is studying other fields in the first (bachelor's) and second (master's) degrees. The former five-

year study cycle was replaced by a tree- or two-year study cycle in a field. This is the cause that the relevant level of knowledge is not reached and that competences are not attained – giving rise to shortcomings.

- Higher education (according to research) does not prepare for the job market (increasing unemployment among higher school graduates). Important are the “fields of study not adapted to the needs of the economy and the job market, and their limitations of quotas of places (Higher education facilities enjoy relative autonomy when it comes to designing their study offer – MP). Not considered is also the fact, how many graduates are taken off the job market. A range of graduates are generated that are not prepared for any job at all (cultural and social sciences, among others)” (Szafraniec 2011);
- The knowledge and competences obtained during studies do not correspond to requirements at the workplace (old knowledge, too much theory, lack of order, theory and practice not related to each other, (...) too few soft (social) competences (conf. Szafraniec 2011);
- Lack of clarity of the education offer of a higher school and school that often formulate market-oriented promises without redeeming them. Certificates and diplomas of other higher education facilities are considered of lower value (they are “easier” to attain).
- Very strong increase of the ambitions of the younger generation achieving higher education following so-called education fashion (without any sort of selection; sufficient are multiple matriculations and then permanent correspondence to minimised requirements). At the same time, many courses are studied alongside one another, with simultaneous employment. Youths attain many competences, but these are very superficial. “Everything and nothing” is studied. Intellectual potential is dispersed. The extensive ambitions are not accompanied by real competences that could then be utilised by the job market.
- In practice, there is no possibility of actual, real measurement of the readiness of students (both with respect to theory and practice) that would be appropriate to compare the time before the introduction of the Bologna system (lacking is ‘hard’ data for real comparison of the time following the transformation to the time before the transformation). It is difficult to determine whether the enormous work of academia to introduce this change was at all profitable. The notion cannot be excluded that the changes were only seeming and that the “regulation” of the system can only be seen in the area of documentation, having attained no real influence on common practices in higher school life.

The driving forces behind studying in Poland are unemployment and the demographic low. The inability to find a job following graduation from a general secondary school leads to something that is referred to in Erikson's theory as a psychosocial moratorium. The decision to start one's adult life is delayed, one remains with the parents, and they have to support their children. Young Poles study despite the fact that they are of the opinion that a graduation diploma does not constitute a guarantee of employment (Sendrowicz 2014); one studies but to study, with the aim of gaining broad knowledge; this is supported by the present demographic developments. Higher education facilities fight over candidates, taking anyone that can present a certificate of maturity. There is no selection process, not even during studies, because higher education facilities are interested in popularising their own master's title. The quality of higher school education raises more and more doubts. Companies also indicate this. Competition and rivalry among universities have led to a situation, in which one could achieve a higher school degree that provides no guarantee of the quality of education. We are dealing with a surplus of higher schools, excessive students and graduates of so-called "cheap" fields, for which one only needs a building and teachers (historical sciences, social sciences, law) and lack of workplaces. Higher education facilities attract candidates, offer interesting education, without comparing these to the situation on the regional job market. The pressure applies frequently to traditional fields, their areas and costs, without any adaptation to the changing reality.

An important priority in terms of any increases of education quality and the adaptation of the education offer to the job market is research of the professional biographies of graduates. This is governed by a statutory obligation (Polish Act of March 18th, 2011, amending the act on higher education, the act on scientific titles and titles in the arts and on amendments to certain acts of law (Pl. Ustawa o zmianie ustawy *Prawo o szkolnictwie wyższym, ustawy o stopniach naukowych i tytule naukowym oraz o stopniach i tytule sztuki oraz o zmianie niektórych innych ustaw*)). It requires an analysis of the professional careers of graduates. The authors of the report on these issues that was conducted based on relevant research (conf. Bartel / Góralczyk – Modzelewska 2012) were able to prove that such processes can only be executed in Poland with great difficulty, because:

- proven standards of research of graduate biographies are lacking, permitting no comparisons between higher education facilities,
- the use of such data and implementation of results is limited primarily by smaller higher schools that often have no access to modern technologies, and the data collection procedures cannot be implemented by distributed survey recipients,

- lacking or insufficient cooperation between education facilities, the job market, local governments and employees,
- very limited interest of employers in the activities that are not related to one's economic role,
- lack of experience of higher education facilities in the execution of such research and analyses,
- such research being considered unnecessary by some higher schools,
- higher schools refuse to provide access to the collected data,
- students are not encouraged to participate in such research and to see its importance (Bartel / Góralczyk – Modzelewska 2012).

Study programmes offered at present are overloaded with theoretical knowledge, there are too few practically-oriented courses. In the end, the graduate achieve very broad knowledge without being able to practically use it. Lacking professional experience contributes to employers only employing graduates reluctantly. “The fact is interesting that the majority of companies and future employees have no interest at all in cooperating with universities. The purpose would be to amend this theoretical aspect with practical ideas or to conduct interpersonal training. However, students expect to receive from the school extensive competences that cannot be developed there” (Bartel / Góralczyk – Modzelewska 2012).

The analyses of employment and of the professional situation of graduates in conjunction with the evaluation of their competences on the job market should serve better evaluation of study curricula, work and improvement of study courses and their expansion. It would also lead to improved quality of study curricula. Presently, work is ongoing on a national system, some schools are performing their own analyses and take into account experiences from abroad (Germany, the UK, France). The disclosed report stresses that the “recommendations concerning career supervision are considered to be something forced and unnecessary. It is done without will – and the consequences are: lacking deep analyses and the lack of will to integrate the attained data to make education at higher schools more effective and more efficient, which would contribute to the entire system” (Bartel / Góralczyk – Modzelewska 2012).

According to Łukasz Kaczmarek (2012) one could conclude that “the reform of higher schools was already introduced, but it did not bring about any improvement in the financial basis of the system. Save for superficial changes (change of employment contracts of scientific and teaching personnel into so-called “junk contracts”). One's scientific career also became more “transparent”, so that young scientists do not know any more the criteria they have to fulfil. Strengthened was the role of the boss in the base units and the parametrisation of higher schools

is conducted quantitatively according to the rules described in Warsaw. Studies are financed quantitatively. On-line discussions (forums) note that the reform of higher education is yet to come about. Suggestions are made that one should tell young people that universities are not the right places for people that do not want to work. Science needs to be separated from universities to enable young people to decide, depending on their talents, whether they want to join science in the truest sense of the word, or choose a course of studies agreed upon with potential employers. The current situation is not supportive of higher education facilities at all. In actuality, nobody seems to be interested in it – education facilities strive to get as many students as possible, because their existence depends on them, the government praises itself for high student counts, and the candidates that may attain a graduation diploma with sometimes very low requirements.

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