


DOI 10.4467/25439561KSR.23.014.18991

MAŁGORZATA ABASSY  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9294-6156>
Jagiellonian University
Cracow

THE THIRD MISSION OF THE UNIVERSITY
AS A CONTINUATION
OF THE POLISH INTELLIGENTSIA ETHOS.
THE CASE STUDY
OF THE JAGIELLONIAN UNIVERSITY

TRZECIA MISJA UNIwersYTETU
JAKO KONTYNUACJA ETOSU POLSKIEJ INTELIGENCJI.
STUDIUM NA PRZYKŁADZIE
UNIwersYTETU JAGIELLOŃSKIEGO

Abstract

The objective of this study is to examine to what extent the attitudes of university lecturers are a continuation of Polish intelligentsia ethos and to what extent – they are a response to contemporary socio-economic challenges of an academic environment. The research hypothesis put forward by the author stipulated that the third mission of the university should be perceived as having more axiological than practical dimension as cooperation with the economic and social environment of the university encompasses the values developed by the culture of education in the process of historical growth of the nation.

The primary source of the research were the results of a questionnaire survey conducted on a sample group of students and lecturers at one of Poland's largest universities.

The results indicate the tendency to return to the classic ethos of the Polish intelligentsia in which the protection of diversity and national identity came first, contrary to global trends.



Streszczenie

Celem artykułu jest zbadanie, na ile postawy nauczycieli akademickich są kontynuacją etosu polskiej inteligencji, a na ile – odpowiedzią na współczesne wyzwania ze strony otoczenia społeczno-gospodarczego uczelni. Wysłunięto hipotezę badawczą, że trzecia misja uczelni ma wymiar bardziej aksjologiczny niż praktyczny. Współpraca z otoczeniem gospodarczym i społecznym obejmuje wartości wypracowane przez kulturę edukacji w procesie historycznego rozwoju narodu.

Podstawowym źródłem badań były ankiety przeprowadzone na grupie studentów i wykładowców jednej z największych polskich uczelni.

Uzyskane wyniki wskazują na tendencję do powrotu do klasycznego etosu polskiej inteligencji, w którym na pierwszym miejscu stawiano ochronę różnorodności i tożsamości narodowej, wbrew tendencjom globalnym.

Keywords: university, intelligentsia, Poland, third mission

Słowa kluczowe: uniwersytet, inteligencja, Polska, trzecia misja

Introduction

The aim of this article is to examine to what extent the attitudes of academic teachers are a continuation of the ethos of the Polish intelligentsia, and to what extent – a response to contemporary challenges from the social and economic environment of the university. The results of the research will allow for more precise planning of internationalisation activities, i.e. the inclusion of Polish universities in international research and educational networks. Effective internationalisation is the result of synergies between the traditional content of a particular culture and the challenges of the values of globalisation.

The premise for undertaking the research was the realisation of the transformation process of Polish universities after 1989 and the recognition of the split that is currently deepening. The transformation process has been determined by several significant dates and the decisions following them. The first stage: 1989–1999 – was marked by the formulation of new undertakings and directions in education in Poland finally liberated from communist stigma and thriving with freedom and democracy for which the Polish intelligentsia had struggled¹. The second stage started together with the Bologna Process implementation in higher education, in

¹ D. Nałęcz, *Sen o władzy. Inteligencja wobec niepodległości*, Warszawa, Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1994, p. 97.

1999². Creating European Higher Education Area and including Polish higher education into it was the ultimate goal of the Bologna Process³. Rules of “The European Higher Education Area: Joint declaration of the European Ministers of Education convened in Bologna on the 19th of June 1999” were to facilitate international scientific cooperation and standardize organizational solutions concerning syllabuses and recognition of academic degrees. There was “cultural distinctiveness of national education programs” among the rules⁴. Nevertheless, contrary to the organizational solutions, the latter one was not precisely defined. Both its essence and range were not discussed within the frames of changing political, social and educational reality. Adoption of “Act of 20 July 2018. The Law on Higher Education and Science” was another groundbreaking event in the process of transformation.

The higher education reforms stemmed from the challenges that followed globalisation and economic crises. It caused further changes and challenges, such as massification of higher education⁵ and the necessity to find additional financial resources. The most important challenge, however, were expectations of the “mass student” towards academic education as such, which clashed with the Polish university ethos established for centuries upon groundbreaking historical events where freedom and preservation of national identity used to be its core values. The split is observed mainly in the field of values and goals of education and upbringing. It reflects educational policy of the university, which is consistent at the declarative level but inconsistent in practice. On the other hand, the split reflects ambivalent attitudes of teachers towards the changes.

The hypothesis of the research stipulates that at present Polish higher education system is facing a struggle between “tradition” and “innovation”. Finding common ground for the both aforementioned would enable the “innovators” to benefit from the best practices of the “traditionalists”. The best practices are those that have been found to be successful in accomplishing set goals for decades. Additionally, “tradition” is a decisive factor for stability of the process of education at the university level.

A typical student comes into the walls of the university for a relatively short period of time. “What will I do after I graduate?” is the main question they ask themselves. A university teacher becomes a member of an academic community for

² M. Skinder, *Implementacja postanowień procesu bolońskiego w ustawach o szkolnictwie wyższym Polski, Lotwy, Francji, Rumunii, Grecji, Czech i Finlandii*, “Studia Prawnoustrojowe” 2021, no. 54, p. 530. DOI: 10.31648/sp.7138.

³ A. Kraśniewski, *Proces Boloński*, Warszawa, Fundacja Rozwoju Systemu Edukacji, 2009, p. 5.

⁴ A. Sinder, *op. cit.*, p. 533.

⁵ R. Maciołek, *Umasowienie (wy)kształcenia na poziomie wyższym a elitarność uczelni. Analiza pojęć na podstawie prac Ryszarda Borowicza*, “Zeszyty Naukowe WSG” 2016, vol. 27, no. 1, p. 37.

a longer period of time. They treat their work as a kind of vocation, which has two consequences: the time devoted to research, academic activities and students is not reflected by their salary, and they regard themselves as a part of a community founded on an academic ethos. The ethos can be defined as a lifestyle of the community, the general orientation of a culture, the hierarchy of values adopted by it, either formulated explicitly or readable from human behavior⁶. It is worth emphasizing that “ethos” is applied to a group of people, not to an individual. It is a tool for identifying a group of people united by common values, goals and activities. Thus, ethos of an academic teacher is formed through belonging to an academic community and is attached to a certain role in a society⁷. The role of an academic teacher includes research, educating and upbringing of the society, as it was formulated in a well-known speech by Kazimierz Twardowski in 1932, about the majesty of the University⁸. The idea was supported and reminded by contemporary universities’ rectors⁹. Education and bringing up, understood as shaping one’s personal qualities, are presented as complementary to each other. Raising young people as compassionate and capable of cooperating in such a way that common interest prevails over individual one is an inseparable part of educational process¹⁰. They are to become a part of the social elite whose vocation is leading the society towards progress. The academic ethos is deeply rooted in the humanistic ethos of the Polish intelligentsia. Social leadership, combined with noble individual qualities and knowledge, predestined university teachers as the ethos-based community to be guardians of national identity, especially in the times of political dependence¹¹. The obligation to protect the field of universal values can be also transferred to a cultural context of political independence of the state. This is the case when the university is perceived as a space where traditional values are cultivated and they are incompatible with

⁶ M. Ossowska, *Ethos rycerski i jego odmiany*, Warszawa, Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, 1986, pp. 5–6.

⁷ B. Dopart, *Etos wykładowcy akademickiego (etos a praktyka)*, “Bibliotekarz Podlaski” 2020, vol. 46, no. 1, p. 61.

⁸ K. Twardowski, *O dostojęństwie Uniwersytetu*, Poznań 1933, reprint: transl. by T. Olszewski & O. Wojtasiewicz, Poznań, Uniwersytet im. Adama Mickiewicza, 2011, p. 4.

⁹ See J. Górniewicz, *De dignitate Academiae – constanter firmiterque. O dostojęństwie Akademii – nieustannie i stanowczo*, Olsztyn, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Warmińsko-Mazurskiego, 2019, p. 7; F. Ziejka, *Czy można dziś jeszcze mówić o dostojęństwie uniwersytetu?*, [in:] *Idea uniwersytetu: reaktywacja*, P. Sztompka & K. Matuszek (Eds.), Kraków, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego, 2015, p. 49.

¹⁰ K. Twardowski, op. cit., p. 14.

¹¹ P. Górski, *Problematyka inteligencji w pracach polskich socjologów okresu międzywojennego*, “Kwartalnik Historii Nauki i Techniki” 2007, vol. 52, no. 3–4, pp. 131–164; L. Hass, *Inteligencji polskiej dole i niedole. XIX i XX wiek*, Łowicz, Mazowiecka Wyższa Szkoła Humanistyczno-Pedagogiczna, 1999, pp. 93–122.

social and economic needs of the university's environment. Freedom of discussion, quest for truth, sharing knowledge with everybody for free instead of selling it to the fortunate ones who can afford it, high standards of research deriving from personal qualities and the central question "Who is a human being?/ Who am I?" are the key characteristics of university standards that have passed irretrievably¹². The concept of the "failure of the university" coined by A. Bloom was explored further by other researchers¹³.

In conclusion, the third mission of the university is a strongly semantical concept. Cooperation with economic and social environment encompasses the values developed by the culture of education in the process of historical development of the nation. As a result, the desire for internationalisation clashes with the tendency to preserve the cultural specificity of education. The latter, often interpreted as "tradition", is a desire to maintain national identity. Universities, by their nature, are predestined to store values and knowledge and to care for the foundations, which is why the response to the needs of the environment raises additional questions. The most important of them concerns the direction of influence: whether it is the university that generates values and transmits them to society by supporting its development, or – it recognises the needs of its environment and responds to them. In the first case the university is the causative agent, in the second one – the environment. The question of agency is also a question of leadership. The latter, in turn, is rooted in the mission of the Polish intelligentsia and its ethos.

Materials and methods

The goal of this study is achieved by pursuing answers to the research questions. Firstly, what is more important, from the point of view of students and academic teachers: how educational process or its effectiveness is reflected by graduates satisfactory labour market outcomes? Secondly, what does the knowledge of the economic and social environment look like through the prism of the involvement of the university community in non-academic activities as for motivation and actions taken? Thirdly, in the declarative layer, is greater emphasis placed on the mission of the university as a promoter of knowledge and guardian of national identity, or on its role as an effective agent of socio-economic development?

¹² A. Bloom, *The Closing of the American Mind. How Higher Education Has Failed Democracy and Impoverished the Souls of Today's Students*, New York, Simon and Schuster, 1987, p. 27.

¹³ See T. Clark, N. Royle (Eds.), *The University in Ruins: Essays on the Crisis in the Concept of the Modern University*, special issue, "Oxford Literary Review", 1995, p. 213–242.

The results of the surveys conducted on the sample of students and lecturers of one of the largest Polish universities constitute the primary source for the study. The research period covered years 2018–2022 and was determined by a difficult global situation resulting from COVID 2019 pandemic and international crisis in many spheres: social, political and economic.

The surveys were conducted on a group of 200 (out of 4737 employees) academic teachers and 491 (out of 34 432) students which constitutes 4,2% and 1,4% of the whole academic community, respectively. The surveys were uploaded to the google drive. The link to the surveys, along with a request to complete them, was sent to respondents through the secretariats of university units. Surveys were prepared separately for the lecturers and separately for the students. All the crucial issues concerning the problem of the academic ethos were arranged into a set of four questions. Three of them were single-choice, one was multiple-choice. They were parallel, as the diagram below illustrates.

Table 1. Q&A types for students and faculty staff

QUESTION	LECTURERS	STUDENTS	QUESTION TYPE
1.	In your opinion, the university should:	In your opinion, the University should:	Single choice
2.	The University is first and foremost	The University is first and foremost	Single choice
3.	In addition to teaching, scientific and organizational work, do you undertake additional activities for the benefit of the university community?		Single choice
4.	Indicate what activities you have been involved in in the last 5 years.	Indicate what activities you engage in or have been involved in during your studies.	Multiple choice
5.		When undertaking activities within the university community (e.g. in student self-government, scientific circles), you treat them primarily as:	Single choice

Quantitative analysis was used for the survey questions, aimed at verifying general attitudes towards the objectives of academic education and the degree of involvement in non-university activities, along with the manifested level of motivation.

Findings and Conclusions

The first question was about the main responsibility of the university, and the suggested answers were the same for all the lecturers and students. It began with the phrase: *According to your opinion the main responsibility of the university is...* The results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. The main responsibility of the university

QUESTION	TEACHERS' ANSWERS PERCENTAGE (N)	STUDENTS' ANSWERS PERCENTAGE (N)
...to cultivate knowledge	32,7	20,6
...to support integrated personality development	62,3	65,6
...to answer the needs of labour market	5	13,8

As it can be observed, both academic teachers and students put integrated personality development in the first place as the main responsibility of the university. The notion of “integrated personality development” requires further analyses due to its unclear semantic scope. Nevertheless, neither cultivating knowledge nor answering the needs of labour market occupies, according to the respondents, an important position among the goals of education. Moreover, acquiring practical skills for further needs of being employed does not seem to matter. A further research opportunity opens here and it is included in the question: *Does development of integrated personality is aimed at nurturing skills and abilities' flexibility in adjusting and adaptation to the rapidly changing economic environment? What personal qualities are expected to be nurtured?*

Another research question was related to an individual vs. collective dimension. It stemmed from an assumption that cultivating academic ethos and responsibility for common good requires readiness for devotion. The question started with the phrase: *University is, first of all...* The answers to the question are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Individualism versus collectivism

QUESTION	TEACHERS' ANSWERS PERCENTAGE (N)	STUDENTS' ANSWERS PERCENTAGE (N)
...a community where development of one's personality results from relations	58,3	45,2
... a group of individuals where everybody pursues one's own goals	41,7	54,8

The results show that interpersonal relations and the sense of community resulting from them, are more important for the group of academic teachers. However, students present more individualistic attitude. The difference of 13,1% should be perceived as significant as these are young people who create the university atmosphere with the power of their expectations towards the educational process and by the fact that they are the seed of future academic staff. Regardless of their intellectual potential the sense of community seems to be gradually ceasing to exist although it is possible that it will be developed on the grounds of a different value than interpersonal relations. This factor, however, needs another research approach and further investigation.

To clarify the aforementioned results, questions about an involvement in some activities after working hours and motivations for them were posed. Let us present the answers for the academic teachers and for the students separately. First, the question about the involvement and reason for it was asked: *In addition to your didactic, scientific and organizational work, do you undertake additional activities for the benefit of the university community?* Four possible answers were given. The results are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Academic teachers. Engagement and motivations for out-of-the-university activities

SUGGESTED ANSWER	TEACHER'S CHOICE PERCENTAGE (N)
Yes, I consider it my duty as a university employee	54,8
Yes, but above all it is due to the pressure from my direct superiors	6
No, but I would be happy to get involved in such activities if I had more time	27,1
No, I don't have the time and/or motivation to be involved in additional activities	12,1

As it can be observed, a significant majority of the academic teachers' group – 60,8% gets engaged into additional activities regardless of didactic and research work, although several of them – constituting 6% of the surveyed group – does it under pressure from their superiors. Nevertheless, significant number – 39,2% – does not take up such activities due to either lack of time or willingness. This factor requires further investigation in the light of individualistic or collectivistic patterns of behaviour within the frames of the *intelligentsia ethos*.

To clarify the nature of these additional activities, especially due to the main purpose of the research regarding the third mission of the university, a question was asked about the type of activities in which academic teachers were involved: *Please indicate what activities you have been involved in over the last 5 years*. The results of that multiple-choice answers are presented in the Table 5.

Table 5. Academic teachers. Types of out-of-the-university activities

SUGGESTED ANSWER	TEACHER'S CHOICE PERCENTAGE (N)
Lectures outside the university popularising their own research	61
Lectures outside the university promoting the faculty/institute	43,7
Participation in/organisation of some events within their own department, e.g. conference	65,8
Help in scientific circles in the organisation of events	40,7
Helping students in their non-university projects	37,7
Organisation of charity events	29,6
Cooperation with non-governmental organisations	27,6
Volunteering outside the university	20,6

The results allow us to conclude that one can observe three aspects of the activities that were undertaken by the university teachers: the scientific aspect that includes lectures for a non-academic community, the organisational aspect concerning the university, including students; and the social aspect that include activities for the benefit of the social environment in the form of volunteering in the organisation of cultural events, etc. It should be emphasised that the idea of leadership understood as personal example has been activated. It coincides with the general idea of the *intelligentsia ethos*. Nevertheless, it needs to be mentioned that the idea consists of at least three components: selfpromotion, promotion of a professional group – in this particular case, the academic teachers, and selfless service for the common good.

The proportions of the components require further investigations regarding the motivations for undertaking the above-mentioned activities.

The motivations and types of out-of-the-university activities were also a subject of research regarding the students. First, the question was posed: *Indicate what activities you engage in or have you been involved in during your studies?*, and 9 possible answers of multi-choice type were suggested. The results are presented in Table 6.

Table 6. Students. Type of out-of-the-university activities

SUGGESTED ANSWER	STUDENTS' ANSWERS PERCENTAGE (N)
Work in local government	8,8
Membership in a scientific circle	54
Organisation of events within the scientific circle, open days, conference, project, etc.	23
Participation in activities promoting the faculty/university/institute	20,2
Participation in student conferences in their own university	30,3
Participation in student conferences outside their own university	17,3
Organisation of actions for the benefit of injured persons	9,6
Cooperation with non-governmental organizations	7,9
Volunteering outside the university	40,5

The relatively high number of those volunteering outside of the university might have resulted from the outbreak of the war in Ukraine. The surveys were conducted in early spring 2022 and then a great portion of the Polish society got engaged in various forms of help for the refugees. Universities were at the forefront of such actions. Taking that fact into consideration, a question about students' motivations for the actions undertaken at the university was asked: *When undertaking activities within the university community (e.g. in student self-government, scientific circles) you treat them primarily as...*, and 4 possible answers of single-choice type were suggested. The results are presented in Table 7.

Table 7. Students. Motivations for in-university-activities

SUGGESTED ANSWER	STUDENTS' ANSWERS PERCENTAGE (N)
selfless action for the common good	26,7
the opportunity to pursue your own passions, interests	62,7
a way to benefit from the involvement, e.g. priority in getting a place in a dormitory	4,5
a path to a future career at the university	6,1

The prevailing choice of the answer: “to pursue one’s passions, interest” correlates with the individualistic attitude of the students towards university’s goals and its main responsibilities. Integrated personality development can be a starting point for cooperation with the university’s environment as a field for implementation of the responsibilities of the third mission. Nevertheless, the assumption that an individual’s interests will be put in the first place, seems to be equally probable; especially in the light of the other suggested answers. Finally, one in five students chose “selfless actions for the common good”.

To sum up, the preliminary results of the surveys conducted among the students and lecturers of one of the biggest Polish universities allow us to assume there is a general tendency towards putting in the first place the development of personal qualities. The issue of individualism and its semantic scope requires further investigation for several reasons. First of all, individualistic aspects of one’s personality constitute an important element of Polish intelligentsia ethos as a group which is predestined to contest reality and undertake necessary actions. On the other hand, individualism needs to be supported by a consent to sacrifice and readiness to marginalise individual interests for common good. Recognition of the main tendency requires further investigation. It results from the above analyses that the third mission of university is activated as help and support for those in need. It is also implemented by popularising knowledge among the society. In that case it is combined with self-promotion, which, in turn, takes us back to the question about the role of an individual in the process of interaction between university representatives and the socio-economic environment.

Acknowledgments

This research was funded by the Priority Research Area Heritage under the program Excellence Initiative – Research University at the Jagiellonian University in Krakow.

Declaration of interest statement: The authors report there are no competing interests to declare.

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