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Social responsibility of universities – the example of AGH University of Science and Technology¹

Social responsibility is an important element in the functioning of contemporary universities, especially those to a large extent financed by budget money. The key question here is how to achieve a symbiotic relationship between the university and its environment. The evolution of the Polish higher education system since 1990 shows how the mutual relations between the university and its surroundings may change over time. The conclusions published in the OECD report on higher education are juxtaposed with the description of the status quo of the Polish universities and compared with the model of the entrepreneurial university. The author's intention is to prove that any socially responsible university must serve its environment. The AGH University of Science and Technology in Cracow is given as an example of a socially responsible university, a case study supported by a number of examples. In the conclusions, it is stated that the current, difficult times require implementing the social duties through the third mission of the university, (developing cooperation of the university with its environment, including broadening the scope of employees' entrepreneurship as well as the creation of the conditions conducive for the commercialization of technology) blending it with its first (education) and second (research) missions. In order for that to work in practice, higher education institutions ought to constantly improve their activities so that social responsibility becomes their priority.

Context

The university is under growing pressure from the business environment on the one hand, and the central and local government environment on the other. They all expect it to create, impart and use knowledge in a way that would be better than ever before. The redundancy of knowledge and competence present in universities is not perceived as being properly exploited. It is connected with a stronger identification of academics with their disciplines than with their universities, especially in institutions and faculties employing staff that represents various fields of knowledge. Another barrier to sharing knowledge is the loose organizational structure of universities, sometimes dubbed a „federation of departments”, that leads to isolating their structural units².

¹ The paper has been supported by Ministry of Science and Higher Education under the project N 115 0732 33.

² J. Jabłecka, *Uniwersytet jako organizacja ucząca się*, [in:] A. Szuwarzyński (eds.), *Zarządzanie wiedzą w szkolnictwie wyższym*, Wydawnictwo Zakładu Zarządzania Wiedzą i Informacją Naukowo-Techniczną, Wydział Zarządzania i Ekonomii Politechnika Gdańska, Gdańsk 2004 (in Polish).

Porter and Kramer are right in saying that *corporate growth and social welfare are not a zero-sum game*³. Can this opinion, however, refer to the contemporary university that aspires to the name of a knowledge organization? Can we paraphrase Porter and Kramer's words to declare that social responsibility of the university and its success are not a zero-sum game? It seems to be a rhetorical question. It would perhaps be more valid to ask: *How to achieve the maximum effect of synergy?* or *How to achieve a symbiotic relationship between the university and its environment?*⁴.

A number of authors deal with the question of social responsibility in the academic context. In his text about the entrepreneurial university, Burton Clark emphasizes the importance of building bridges between the university and the stakeholders⁵. Judith Sutz sees the necessity of broadening the traditional roles of universities (i.e. education and research) to include the so-called third mission – creating relationships with their surroundings⁶. Henry Etzkovitz and Loet Leydesdorff also stress the key role of building lasting bonds between universities and their business and political environments, calling it the „triple helix”, a term that suggestively illustrates how strong these relations should be⁷.

Johan Wissema proposes a model of the third-generation university, in which the key to success in creating a knowledge-based society lies in, among other things, broadening the scope of entrepreneurship among the university staff and students, which would ideally lead to technological commercialization. According to Wissema, the crucial factor here is for the university to become an international centre for technological transfer, implementing know-how and grouping of diverse research, financing and consulting institutions, as well as other organizations indispensable for supporting the commercialization of the technology, around the university. In Wissema's opinion technical universities have to decide between the two possibilities: to compete with similar universities around the world, creating international technology centres and contributing to international talent market or to support local entrepreneurship, playing the role of local educational centres. According to the author of the article, both roles are equally important. Setting up interdisciplinary teams, in a broader degree than hitherto, is vital in universities, which is not fostered by the traditional organization of contemporary universities. Wissema proposes that instead of the current state, in which the departments are organizational axis while research teams – coordinating one, it

³ M. Porter, M. Kramer, *Strategy and society, The link between competitive advantage and corporate social responsibility*,

http://harvardbusinessonline.hbsp.harvard.edu/email/pdfs/Porter_Dec_2006.pdf, [19.03.2009].

⁴ This remark concerns Polish state-owned universities. It's not surprising in relation to didactic activity, but in case of research and development activity it cannot be ignored.

⁵ B.R. Clark, *Creating Entrepreneurial Universities: Organizational Pathways of Transformation*, Pergamon Press, New York 1998.; B.R. Clark, *Sustaining Change in Universities. Continuous in Case Studies and Concepts*, Society for Research into Higher Education & Open University Press, 2004.

⁶ J. Sutz, *The New Role of the University in the Productive Sector*, [in:] H. Etzkovitz, L. Leydesdorff (eds.), *Universities and the Global Knowledge Economy. A Triple Helix of University – Industry – Government Relations*, Pinter, London, Washington 1997, p. 11.

⁷ H. Etzkovitz, L. Leydesdorff (eds.), *Universities and the Global Knowledge Economy. A Triple Helix of University – Industry – Government Relations*, Pinter, London, Washington 1997.

should be other way round, the teams ought to become the institution's axis and its departments – coordinators.

Other important conditions include: elite education alongside the mass teaching, introducing English as the basic language of communication, quality assessment based on the appeals system, as well as encouraging and developing the concept of internal competition⁸.

John Brennan points out that no national system of higher education should be a closed system⁹. He examines the interplay of mutual expectations of universities and their environments, as well as the issue of the changing social reception of the university as a knowledge institution¹⁰.

The changing role of universities has also become the focal point of interest among the most important academic associations in Europe. In its *Glasgow Declaration* (2005), the European University Association states: *Europe needs strong and creative universities as the main actors shaping up the European knowledge society*. The document says that universities perceive the necessity of assuring the balance between autonomy and responsibility by means of internal procedures (Glasgow Declaration).

The author of this paper is of the opinion that the university fulfils its public duty when it evolves towards the model of an organization serving the society. The question that may come to mind here is how to reconcile the university's autonomy with its social responsibility¹¹. This study concerns the problem of social responsibility of universities functioning in the Polish reality, it may therefore be a good idea to present the evolution of higher education in Poland first.

Evolution of higher education in Poland

Tertiary education in Poland has undergone a deep transformation since the early 1990's (Chart 1). The changes were initiated by the *Higher Education Act* of 12 December 1990. Back then, the main challenge was to increase the total number of students. Unfortunately, this objective was not followed by sufficient public funding.

Chart 1. Higher education in Poland (selected data)

(data concerning private universities is given in the brackets)

| | 1990/1991 | 2000/2001 | 2008/2009 |
|------------------------|------------------|--------------|--------------|
| Number of universities | 112 (no data) | 310 (195) | 456 (325) |

⁸ J.G. Wissema, *Technostarters, why and how*, Polish Agency for Enterprise Development, Warsaw 2005.

⁹ J. Brennan, *Higher education and social change*, „Higher Education”, 2008/56.

¹⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 383.

¹¹ H. van Ginkel, *Academic freedom and social responsibility – the role of university organizations*, „Higher Education Policy”, 2002/15, pp. 347–351; F. Rajaoson, *Academic freedom and social responsibility reflections from the African experience*, „Higher Education Policy”, 2002/15, pp. 375–379; J. Välimaa, D. Hoffman, *Knowledge society discourse and higher education*, „Higher Education”, 2008/56, pp. 277–279.

| | | | |
|--|-----------------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|
| | available) | | |
| Number of students | 404,000 (no data available) | 1,580,000 (472,000) | 1,928,000 (659,000) |
| Number of graduates | 56,000 (no data available) | 304,000 (80,000) | 410,000 (154,000) |
| Number of doctoral students | 2,700 | 25,600 (2,103) | 32,500 (974) |
| Number of postgraduate students | 32,800* | 146,750 (25,624) | 168,400 (50,224) |
| Number of full-time academic teachers | 59,334* (0) | 70,865 (9,343) | 81,784 (16,847) |
| Enrolment rate (%) | 12,9 | 40,7 | 52.7 ¹² |
| Public funding of higher education (% of GDP) | 0.82* | 0.72** | 0.88*** |
| Share of non-public income in state universities | (no data available) | 33%** | 28%*** |
| Share of students paying for courses | (no data available) | 63% | 58% |

*1991; **2000; ***2008 (preliminary data)

Source: own study based on: *Szkolnictwo wyższe. Dane podstawowe 1992*, Ministerstwo Edukacji Narodowej, Warszawa 2002; *Szkoły wyższe w roku 1996/1997*, Główny Urząd Statystyczny, Warszawa 1997; *Szkoły wyższe i ich finanse w roku 2008*, Główny Urząd Statystyczny, Warszawa 2009

The rapid changes in Polish universities and their environment in the 1990's, especially the mass inflow of students, as well as the Bologna and Lisbon Strategies, caused that the break of the centuries in Poland saw a renewed debate on the necessity to introduce new higher education laws. In 2005, after several years of discussions in Polish academic circles, the new *Higher Education Act* was finally passed. The document that concerned both the state-owned and private universities was quite bulky. The intention of prof. Jerzy Woźnicki, head of the legislative team appointed by the President of Poland, was that the detailed regulations limit the possible freedom of interpretation on the part of the Ministry of Science and Higher Education. One of the first articles clearly states that: A higher education institution shall be autonomous in all areas of its activity pursuant to the rules laid down in this Act¹³.

¹² The average in OECD – 57%, <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/16/55/41262145.pdf>, [19.03.2009].

¹³ Act of 27 July 2005, Law on Higher Education.

Two years later, a need for updating the legislation became apparent. The discussion focused on two fundamental questions: *Where are we now?* and *Where are we going?*. In the 2007 report prepared for the OECD, the Polish experts outlined the condition of the country's universities¹⁴. The report was a self-assessment that the OECD experts needed in order to prepare their own document, entitled *Reviews of Tertiary Education Poland*¹⁵. One of the recommendations was that the Polish system of higher education requires a clearer outward orientation and should better respond to social needs. According to the OECD experts, Polish universities ought to react to various economic and social expectations by departing from the strict focus on „academic” tasks and involving employers and representatives of local self-government in the advisory academic bodies at the system and institutional levels¹⁶.

According to the OECD report, in order to assist Polish universities in meeting social requirements in the future, it is crucial at the system level to:

- consult changes in legislation with non-academic circles, including employers, local self-government representatives, associations and local communities;
- encourage decision-makers and beneficiaries who are not part of the system to articulate their expectations concerning the target competences of the university graduates, in-service forms of education and advisory services offered by the university – this will allow universities to depart from the excessive „inward orientation”;
- develop a system of consultations with foreign experts and researchers of Polish origin working abroad;
- create a vision and a set of rules for the vocational sector with a strong orientation towards employers' needs, closely integrated with the local and regional labour market;
- prepare and implement a coherent information strategy;
- ensure that universities receive funding for initiating new forms of activity¹⁷.

The OECD report also calls for a debate concerning the question of managing Polish universities, including:

- the practice of electing university authorities;
- simplifying the path of academic careers;
- introducing by state-aided universities an obligatory and precise formulation of their institutional mission and strategic plans to be disseminated outside the academic

¹⁴ M. Dąbrowa-Szeffler, J. Jablecka, *OECD Country Background Report for Poland*, Warsaw 2007.

¹⁵ O. Fulton, P. Santiago, C. Edquist, E. El-Khawas, E. Hackl, *OECD Reviews of Tertiary Education Poland*, OECD 2007.

¹⁶ *Ibidem*, pp. 46–47.

¹⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 83.

community, with not only its effects (i.e. the mission and strategy), but also the way to achieve them;

- the obligation to appoint advisory bodies that would allow the participation of external members, as in university boards or councils in the USA and UK¹⁸.

It is interesting to compare the OECD evaluation of the Polish higher education system with the model of the entrepreneurial university¹⁹. Figure 1, the university equalizer suggested by Harry de Boer, Jurgen Enders and Uwe Schimank²⁰, will help in the comparison. The author of this paper stipulates that the positions on the scale representing the factors influencing higher education have been based solely on his own observations and experience. The university equalizer is composed of the following variables that affect the functioning of the university:

- *State Regulations (SR)*, outlining the autonomy of higher education institutions;
- *Academic Self Governance (AG)*, understood as the collectivity of decision-making;
- *Stakeholders Guidance (SG)*;
- *Managerial Self Governance (MG)*;
- *Competition (C)*, i.e. for students, staff and funds²¹.

As seen in Figure 1, the degree of autonomy is broad (the position of SR indicates that the system is not deregulated), as it is assured by the 2005 *Higher Education Act*. More detailed legislative regulations are included in the statutes of the particular universities. The 2005 law also puts the power in the hands of appropriate collective self-governing bodies (AG), with the individual responsibility of the Rector as head of the university. On the one hand, the Rector of a state university is indeed in power, on the other, though – he is formally or by custom obliged to consult all important decisions with other organs. Another factor is that in Polish state universities the authorities are elected by the academic community, including the students (with a 20-percent share). A certain weakness in the Rector's power is that the departments and other basic organizational units in Polish universities are to a large extent autonomous and responsible for their finance – hence the position of MG on the scale in Figure 1. The decentralized management – including the finance – that is so common in Poland, results in their efficiency but weakens the Rector's prerogatives.

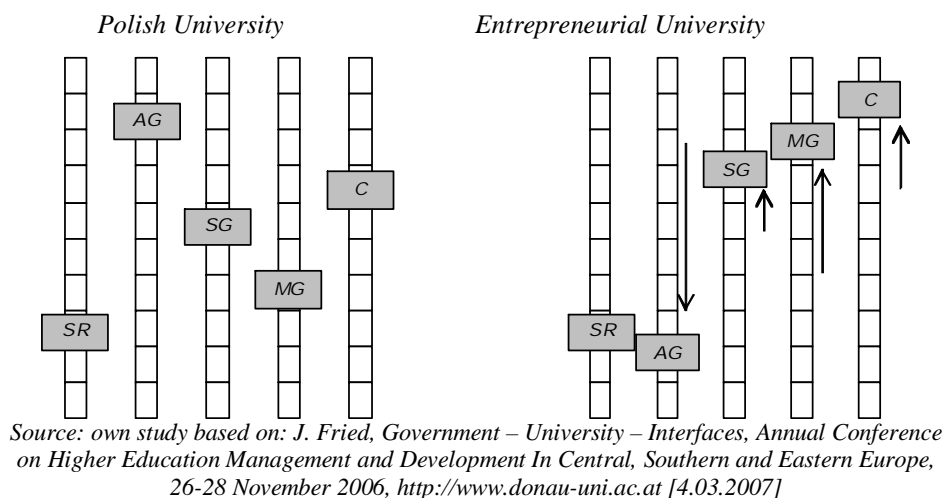
¹⁸ O. Fulton, P. Santiago, C. Edquist, E. El-Khawas, E. Hackl, *OECD Reviews of Tertiary Education Poland*, OECD, 2007.

¹⁹ B.R. Clark, *Creating Entrepreneurial Universities: Organizational Pathways of Transformation*, Pergamon Press, New York 1998; B.R. Clark, *Sustaining Change in Universities. Continuous in Case Studies and Concepts*, Society for Research into Higher Education & Open University Press, 2004.

²⁰ See: U. Schimank, *A Comparative Perspective on Changes in University Governance in Europe*, http://law.anu.edu.au/nissl/Schimank_paper.pdf, [28.02.2007]; H. de Boer, J. Enders, S. Enders, *Orchestrating creative minds. The governance of higher education and research in four countries*, [in:] D. Jansen, *New Forms of Governance in Research Organizations – Disciplinary Approaches, Interfaces and Integration*, Dordrecht, Springer, 2006.

²¹ Ibidem.

Figure 1. The Polish university (according to the 2005 Act) and the entrepreneurial university (according to Clark)



The 2005 *Higher Education Act* acknowledges the significance of social responsibility by including the idea of bridge organizations created to link universities with their system surroundings. The document, which is the foundation of Polish tertiary education, says that *the university may establish a collective body whose competences are defined in the statutes. Such boards („convents”) functioning at state universities are composed of representatives of state institutions, local and industrial authorities, scientific institutes, professional and cultural associations, employer organizations, and – statutes permitting – economic organizations and financial institutions. The detailed composition of each convent and the way of appointing its members are regulated by the statutes.* The intention was, then, to encourage universities to found collective bodies acting as creators of relationships with the environment. Has the idea worked in practice? The answer cannot be definite at this point.

When comparing the current law with the regulations from 1990, it must be said that Polish universities enjoy a bigger autonomy now. They are also given legal instruments that help them build relationships with the surrounding world and enable fair competition for funds, students and staff. The positions of AG and MG on the scale have not moved to a significant degree.

Socially responsible university – university serving its environment²²

Bogdan Wawrzyniak points out that the traditionally understood public institution must above all *meet the expectations of a varied set of stakeholders²³*, thus becoming socially

²² The part of the paper has been published in: K. Leja (ed.), *Spoleczna odpowiedzialność uczelni*, Instytut Społeczeństwa Wiedzy & Faculty of Management and Economics, Gdańsk University of Technology, Gdańsk 2008, pp. 57–72.

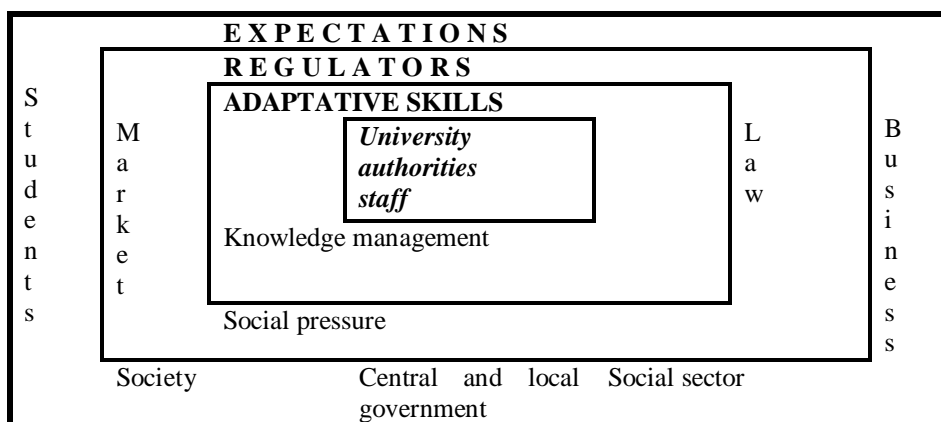
²³ B. Wawrzyniak, *Odnawianie przedsiębiorstwa. Na spotkanie XXI wieku*, Polska Fundacja Promocji Kadr, POLTEXT, Warszawa 1999, p. 214.

responsible. The university's social responsibility may refer both to its internal clients (staff and students) and the external ones (other stakeholders). The university of the future seeks a system of values that is different from the system that has been valid so far, i.e. one based on global competition and social accountability. To become an organization that serves its environment, the university must react positively (but not uncritically) to the needs of the stakeholders. It is the degree to which those expectations are met that defines its social responsibility.

When referring Wawrzyniak's concept of the organization serving the environment to the university (Figure 2), three basic elements must be introduced: the „expectations” of the stakeholders, the „regulators”, i.e. external and internal principles that allow to meet the expectations, and the university's „adaptative skills” that are responses to the expectations and reactions to the regulators²⁴.

Fulfilling the stakeholders' expectations requires creating long-term relations with them. The „regulators” are legal frameworks at the level of the higher education system (*Higher Education Act*) and the level of each academic institution (the statutes of universities).

Figure 2. The university as an organization serving the environment



Source: own study based on B. Wawrzyniak, *op.cit.*, p. 216

The „regulators” should help in building mutual trust between the university and its stakeholders. Apart from the market and the law, another important regulator is the growing social pressure. It is connected with the increase in public spending on higher education, opening the European education market and rising awareness of the study opportunities abroad. There is also the issue of growing requirements towards Polish universities, progress in creating a knowledge-based society, perception of education as a crucial developmental factor, and increase in general appreciation of the public role of universities. The last factor has led to a higher social acceptance of their budget funding

²⁴ Ibidem, pp. 213–215.

on the one hand, and a more careful selection of the target university by candidates on the other. This means reconciling the interests of universities with social expectations²⁵.

The third important element in creating an organization that serves the environment is assuring the university's „adaptative skills”, i.e. generating an organizational culture that promotes innovation and entrepreneurship. In this respect, the Polish legislation could be fine-tuned in a way to approximate Clark's model of the entrepreneurial university, without necessarily losing its traditional academic values. It might be, for instance, worth considering how to improve the functioning of university convents as well as the process of electing the authorities so that the Rector becomes not only a representative of the academic community, but also of the business and local government centres.

The university will become an organization serving its social environment when the natural ability of its staff to self-organize is properly released²⁶. This may be e.g. achieved by making use of the principles of holographic design which, according to the author, are helpful in devising the model of a knowledge-based university²⁷.

Socially responsible university – AGH case study

In 2008–2009, as part of his research project, the author conducted interviews with rectors of several Polish universities of technology. The surveys concerned various issues connected with higher education. One of them was the perception of social responsibility among the university officials and the role of university convents (if appointed) in building relationships with the environment. One example – that of the AGH University of Science and Technology in Cracow – has been selected as the case study here. The 90-year-old school is among the top-rated universities of this type in Poland.

Currently, AGH runs 30 courses, including 170 academic specializations. The total number of students is approximately 32,000 and the figure includes about 22,000 in full-time programmes, 9,000 part-time students, 500 doctoral and over two thousand postgraduate students. The university employs a 3,800 – strong staff, including more than two thousand teachers and lecturers. The scope and size of AGH activities is probably best illustrated by the fact that it is home to about 600 research and teaching laboratories. The university has the annual budget of around 450 million zlotys, half of which is public money²⁸. AGH is a school, in which the share of sources devoted to research and development activity is the biggest in relation to total operating revenues

²⁵ Ibidem, p. 223.

²⁶ A. Binsztok, K. Leja, E. Szczerbicki, *University of the Future. A Fractal Organization of Knowledge*, [in:] A. Pausits, A. Pellert (eds.), *Higher Education Management and Development in Central, Southern and Eastern Europe*, Waxmann, Münster, Nowy Jork, Berlin, Munich 2007, pp. 143–154.

²⁷ Ibidem, p. 145.

²⁸ AGH University of Science and Technology, www.agh.edu.pl, [23.02.2009].

among state-owned (civil) schools and in 2008 it amounted to approximately 33 percent²⁹.

When asked about the university's social responsibility, the Rector of AGH, prof. Antoni Tajduś emphasizes the degree to which it influences the broadly understood environment. The school educates the general public by organizing sessions within the framework of the Technical Open University, attended by hundreds, and recently extended to other cities of the region. AGH has also initiated and is currently running (in co-operation with the Jagiellonian University) the so-called Children's University, attended by 2,500 underage students³⁰.

AGH has also started the social programme „Disabled-Friendly University” which assumes a comprehensive approach towards the needs of its handicapped students. As a result, thanks to the numerous adjustments of buildings and labs as well as employing a group of specialists, the number of disabled people studying at AGH could be increased to reach the present total of around 400. Another noble idea was helping the young patients in one of Cracow's hospitals. In response to the problem of limited access to knowledge among schoolchildren who cannot attend school due to illness, the university managed to get sponsors and bought 40 computers and two servers that were then donated to the hospital to be used as aids in teaching Maths and Physics to the young patients³¹.

In June 2006, the university prepared and adopted its new Statutes, i.e. the fundamental document often called its “constitution”. In comparison with the previous regulations, the new law outlined in more detail the principles of forming and managing university faculties, standardizing the organization of its other units (e.g. establishing the minimum number of professors as four in each) and allowing the creation of various bodies formed in co-operation with other universities and research institutions. Other decisions included introducing a limit in terms served by faculty heads, strengthening the decision-making role and responsibilities of the Rector, and establishing two new organs – the Social Council and the Convent. The organizational structure also changed as a result of the emergence of several completely new units, e.g. the Inter-Faculty School of Biomedical Engineering, the Centre for Transfer of Technologies and the Academic Centre for Entrepreneurship. The AGH Foundation was also established³².

The Rector calls the Convent „lower chamber of the Senate” and believes that it plays an essential role in implementing the concept of social responsibility. The 24-member AGH Convent is composed, among others, of representatives of the central and local governments, administration, science, industry and research organizations. The Chairman of the Convent is President of the Polish Atomic Agency. As the AGH Statutes put it, its Convent's function is to express opinions concerning the strategic functioning of the university, to propose new courses and specializations that are most sought-after in national economy, to assess the current research work, to promote its activities home and abroad, and to share views on the most important aspects connected

²⁹ GUS (Central Statistical Office) – own information.

³⁰ Personal communication.

³¹ Ibidem.

³² Sprawozdanie z działalności AGH w latach 2005–2008, p. 4 (in Polish).

with the position of AGH in its economic background. The Rector's intention in appointing the Convent was to involve as many people as possible in the process of strategic operation of his university³³.

Another collective organ founded at AGH under the *Higher Education Act* is the Social Council. Its members include eight MP's, 12 city mayors, 18 representatives of scientific and research institutions, 61 representatives of industry and various sectors of business from all over the country. The Council's tasks and objectives are, among other things, exchanging information about the skills and qualifications that employers expect from the AGH graduates, gathering data concerning the proposed strategic directions the university should follow and ways of achieving the targets, discussing and formulating the market-adjusted educational, training and research offer of the university, enabling the AGH students to serve their apprenticeship periods and prepare diploma papers in companies and institutions, co-operation and information exchange among the circles represented in the Council, sharing experience and viewpoints on the role of the university in the country's social and economic reality, as well as a collective formulation of the suggested guidelines for the innovative development in industry and ways they should be implemented³⁴.

The function of the Social Council is to help the employers who are its members to better express their expectations towards the AGH graduates, as well as to view their opinion on the suggested directions of the university's development. In this way the university intends to adjust its educational and research offer to the needs of companies and institutions. The companies and institutions of the Council, in turn, offer the AGH students attractive trainings and diploma apprenticeships. They also lobby the university on the market. The Social Council has an open formula and its sessions are held twice a year. The university hopes that those meeting are a true forum for a professional debate concerning higher education in general, and the AGH University in particular, from the perspective of the external environment. The Rector emphasizes the fact that the interests of both sides *often coincide, and formulating common aims helps to bring tangible effects when presented as a uniform standpoint to the outside world*³⁵.

The objective of both the Social Council and the AGH Convent is close co-operation with the university officials in expectation that its graduates become creative initiators of the knowledge-based society rather than merely its passive participants. It is beyond any doubt that the two bodies contribute to bringing about the idea of social responsibility of the university.

The AGH authorities are well aware of the necessity to create conditions for implementing the third mission of the university. In 2007, the Centre for Transfer of technologies was founded, forming a network with the Technical Universities of Lublin, Rzeszów, Kielce and the Regional Agency of Development MARR in Mielec. In the years 2007–2008, the efforts of AGH staff, supported by the Centre for Transfer of Technologies, resulted in as many as 64 patent applications in the field of copyright law, 105 licence deals worth about 2 million zlotys in the field of technology transfer,

³³ AGH University of Science and Technology, www.agh.edu.pl, [05.02.2009].

³⁴ Ibidem.

³⁵ Ibidem.

27 contracts (including 17 with industrial centres, 3 with regional institutions and 5 consortium deals) in the field of economic co-operation. Currently, 25 projects in the field of technology transfer are being realized. On top of that, the Centre was active in organizing trainings about non-budget fund acquisition and carried out an extensive information campaign³⁶.

The success of AGH in acquiring non-budget funds may be well illustrated by sheer figures – in 2007–2008, the university participated in 46 projects within the EU 6th Framework Programme, in 8 programmes within the 7th Framework Programme in 54 other research projects and 13 educational projects. Approximately 200 international research projects are realized in AGH every year.

Another interesting initiative was founding the Academic Centre for Entrepreneurship in 2006. Its main objective is propagating entrepreneurial attitudes among the AGH students, doctoral students, graduates and academic staff, as well as assisting them in setting up and running their own businesses. The Centre has all the material and organizational means needed to help students and staff to run companies according to the most innovative technologies, to support their functioning until their market position is stable, to promote the spirit of free enterprise, to offer information, advice and training services for potential entrepreneurs. The beneficiaries may take advantage of three forms of support: „incubation”, i.e. support and advice up to the moment of achieving market stability by the newly-founded firm; using the Centre’s premises as the site of the newly registered business, and using the Centre’s postbox as the official correspondence address of the company. Currently, twenty firms are using the various forms of the Centre’s assistance, and the number of people who have so far been helped in setting up their businesses is about 400. The AGH Centre for Entrepreneurship cooperates with the University of Agriculture in Cracow, the Entrepreneurship Centres Foundation, the Innovation and Enterprise Centres Association in Poland, the Polish Agency for Enterprise Development, the Business Centre Club Małopolskie Student Forum, the Leader Education Centre Foundation and the AGH Centre for Transfer of Technologies³⁷.

Summary

The expectation of social responsibility from the business world is not excessively high in Poland. According to Rak, our civic awareness, when compared e.g. with that of the Western European countries or the USA, is still immature (Rak 2007, p.92f). However, the expectations connected with social responsibility of universities are articulated more and more distinctly. It is mainly due to the increasing – although still insufficient – public spending on higher education. The changes in social perception of the role of universities are an important impulse for Polish tertiary education to treat its social duties seriously.

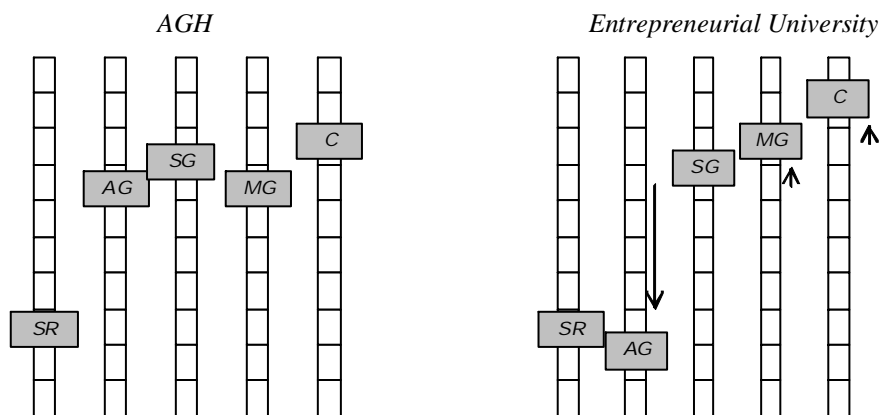
The example of Cracow’s AGH University of Science and Technology shows how broadly the idea may be understood. On the one hand, the university offers a wide spectrum of educational programmes for almost everybody, from schoolchildren,

³⁶ Sprawozdanie..., op. cit., pp. 62–67 (in Polish).

³⁷ Ibidem, pp. 90–95.

through students and graduates of various universities, to the local communities of Cracow and the entire region. Those who are underprivileged are not forgotten either, which is especially important, e.g. in the light of the fact that the number of disabled students in Poland is so low³⁸. On the other hand, the university initiates co-operation with its economic and political environment. Its aim is information exchange, but also another purpose is served at the same time – the university is well promoted. The co-operation is actively supported by AGH's Convent and Social Council that do not just have a decorative function but, according to the Rector, constitute a well-established element in the university's structure. If we add its educational and research initiatives, it may be concluded that the university is developing further in its service to social environment (Figure 3).

Fig. 3. AGH (according to the 2005 Act) and the entrepreneurial university (according to Clark)



Source: own study based on J. Fried, *Government – University – Interfaces, Annual Conference on Higher Education Management and Development In Central, Southern and Eastern Europe, 26-28 November 2006*, <http://www.donau-uni.ac.at> (Accessed 4 March 2007)

To sum up, let us quote a very interesting opinion about social responsibility of universities presented by prof. Tadeusz Luty, Rector of the University of Technology in Wrocław (2002-2008), chairman of the Polish Rectors' Conference (2005-2008) and currently board member of the European University Association:

First of all, for me the term "social responsibility" is not abstract. It means responding to the ambitions, intellectual and professional needs of any citizen who feels like taking the career path at the university. This is connected with my definition of the university – the place which should offer a wide range of programmes for full-time and part-time study as well as, importantly, lifelong learning at the highest possible level. And let the society take advantage of that.

The university is also responsible for preparing young people for social life. There is no other way to increase the quality of societies, to look for social acceptance of reform

³⁸ Among ca. 2 mln students in Poland, ca. 23k (~1,1%) are disabled.



and to get rid of political absurdity than to educate people. This is the role of universities and nobody will do the task for them. Therefore, my idea of social responsibility is encouraging and providing lifelong learning. Lifelong education is the important part of the mission that Polish universities fail to accomplish properly (...).

Another aspect of social responsibility of universities is creating, propagating and sharing knowledge. Creating knowledge means research³⁹.

The case study of the AGH University of Science and Technology in Cracow shows that social responsibility, when accompanied by entrepreneurship, makes the institution immune to the chronic shortages in funding so typical of Polish higher education. One of the results of a growing sense of social sensitivity that AGH exemplifies may also be its financial diversification and the number of initiatives improving its relations with the outside world. This approach is bound to assure a steady inflow of candidates (despite the demographic low among the Polish student-age population) and growing interest in the university's offer in the business and political circles. It is the kind of all-round success for all the partners which supports the assumption made by Porter and Kramer and quoted at the beginning of this article.

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³⁹ The interview with prof. Tadeusz Luty, „Nauka i szkolnictwo wyższe”, 1/2009 (in Polish).

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