

PRACTICAL EDUCATION AT UNIVERSITIES IN POLAND – LEGAL REGULATIONS AND REFLECTIONS*

Edyta Halista-Telus^{†0000-0001-9457-9268}

Politechnical University of Koszalin
<https://doi.org/10.47833/2023.2.ART.005>

Keywords:

education, practical/dual
teaching,
work placements,
legal regulations

Article history:

Received: 24.11.2023
Revised: 07.12.2023
Accepted: 07.12.2023

Abstract

The aim of the article is to show the transformations taking place at universities under the influence of socio-economic changes as well as dynamic changes in the labour market. The considerations are aimed at showing the specifics of dual studies, studies with a practical profile. The key, according to the author, is to present and analyse the legal provisions regulating their existence and functioning in higher education institutions in Poland.

1 Introduction

Dynamic technological development, wars, migrations, economic development and other social phenomena are fundamentally affecting the labour market and changing the lifestyle of young people. Universities are also changing. In ancient times, they were described by Aristotle and Plato as those that exist basically "for nothing", which do not have to serve anyone except themselves. Many years later, to a similar conclusion came French sociologist P. Bourdieu, according to whom the scholastic mind should be focused on "pure thought", excluding thinking about the public and economic spheres [9]. Currently, this way of thinking about universities has become strongly outdated. Some researchers try to answer the question about the validity of the category of distinction in the context of P. Bourdieu's theory. Can we still talk about students as a group of distinction, a group of intelligentsias [1]? Are universities still a place where the distinctions of young intellectuals are formed? Or perhaps the basic tasks and objectives of the existence of the contemporary Academy are completely different, or at least to some extent they try to meet the expectations of modern society.

Currently, changes are taking place in universities in response to the needs of the labour market. One of the changes concerns the introduction of a practical education profile, the aim of which is to qualify students for future professions [15]. The experience gained during studies is intended to help students find a job that is consistent with their capabilities, aptitudes and interests.

Researches show that students, in their assessment of deficiencies in the study program, rank the subjects useful in their future careers first. Moreover, they suggest increasing the number of activities carried out outside the university (visits to enterprises, foundations) as a change [10, 14].

Experts emphasise the benefits of consequent implementation of dual education in higher education institutions. This is an offer of studies with a practical profile, which combines theoretical issues with practical preparation of the student for the profession.

*This study is a product of the EU4DUAL European University Alliance, started in 2023, based upon the Erasmus+ program. Projekt ID: 101089937.

† Corresponding author. E-mail address: edyta.halista-telus@tu.koszalin.pl

The current objectives in the implementation of education in practical-profile fields of study are considered to be:

- linking academic teaching with the economy needs,
- improving relations between academic centres and enterprises,
- familiarising students with the specifics of work in enterprises,
- creating conditions for the employment of students after graduation in the enterprises where they have completed their student work placements [10].

Social expectations and the expectations of universities contribute to continuous monitoring of the quality of education. Critical reflection and responsibility in creating proposals for changes in the field of education are perceived as an indicator of the professional development of graduates [8].

2 Practical teaching – legal regulations

In Poland, dual education is one that combines study and practical preparation for a profession. In Polish law, the term "studies with a practical profile" is more commonly used. Higher education of a dual/practical nature is regulated by legal acts. In order to understand the specifics of this type of education well, it will be necessary to analyse them. The basic legal act is the Act of July 20, 2018, Law on Higher Education and Science (Journal of Laws of 2023, item 742). In Poland, a university may be an academic university or a vocational university. An institution that conducts scientific activities and has scientific category A+, A, B+ is an academic university (Article 14(1)) and may use the name "academy" (Article 16(1)). A vocational university due to the fact that it does not meet the conditions referred to in Article 14, section 1, conducts studies of a practical nature. It prepares students for various types of professions, taking into account socio-economic needs. At this point, it is worth emphasising that within academies there may be organisational units of a practical nature, the educational profile of which is defined in the Act of March 18, 2011 amending the Act – the Law on Higher Education, the Act on Scientific Degrees and Academic Titles and on Degrees and Titles in the Field of Art and amending some other acts (Journal of Laws 2011, No. 84, item 455), as "a module of classes for the acquisition of practical skills by a student or a general academic course, including a module of classes for the acquisition of in-depth theoretical skills by the student" Article 2, section 1 point 18e. If, within its structure, a university conducts degree programmes with both a general-academic and a practical profile, the assumed educational results shall be prepared separately for each of them (Article 4, section 3). Each university shall base its activities on an appropriately prepared statute, which specifies in detail the rules for the organisation and functioning of the institution and the possible types of organisational units (Article 34, section 1, point 5). The units of the university function on the basis of a study programme, the requirements of which are contained in the Regulation of the Minister of Science and Higher Education of September 27, 2018 on degree programmes (Journal of Laws of 2018, item 1861) - Chapter 2, section 3.

The Act on Higher Education and Science indicates the possibility of conducting studies in a dual form. They are of a practical nature, which is distinguished by the active participation of the employer. In order to speak of cooperation between the university and the employer, a written agreement must be concluded between them (Article 62). The condition for conducting practical studies is that half of the ECTS credits included in the study programme must be used for direct contact with an academic teacher (Article 63, section 1, points 1 and 2) while at the same time including that part of the ECTS credits for classes developing practical skills (Article 64(2) point 1). These are usually: conversation classes, workshops, field classes, individual consultations. These are forms of classes that enable conducting classes in direct contact between academic teachers and students: discussions, brainstorming, educational games, or creating practical projects. Moreover, studies with a practical profile assume the student's participation in work placements (Article 67, section 5, points 1 and 2). The duration of work placements depends on the degree at which the student is studying. Thus, in the case of first-cycle studies and long-cycle master's studies, the duration of work placements is 6 months. In second-cycle studies, the duration is 3 months. Each university that offers practical courses, by way of the Rector's regulations, determines the number of hours that a student completes as a work placement.

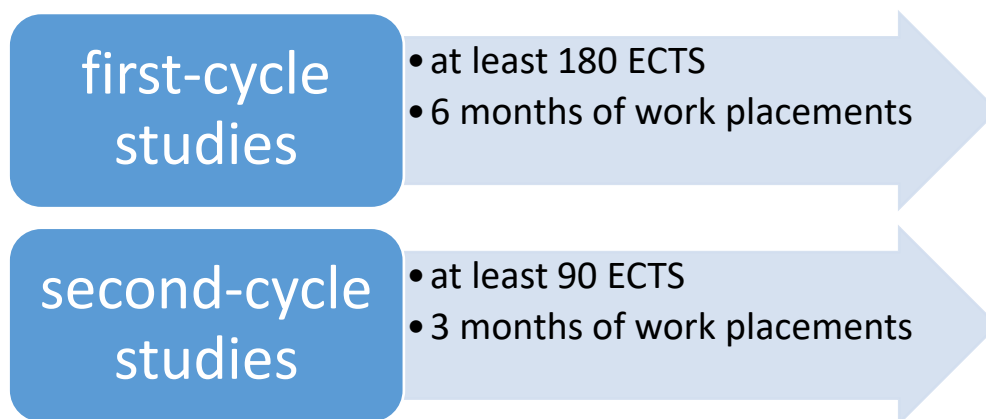


Figure 1. Time of work placements on first and second-cycle studies

The number of hours that students must complete in enterprises or institutions depends on the specificity of the field of science. The prerequisite for graduation is the attainment of the learning outcomes specified in the study programme. In first-cycle studies, at least 180 ECTS credits are obtained. In second-cycle studies, the number of ECTS credits is at least 90, where 1 ECTS credit is 25-30 hours.

In the case of studies preparing students for professions such as: doctor, dentist, pharmacist, nurse, midwife, laboratory diagnostician, physiotherapist, paramedic, veterinarian, architect or teacher - educational standards are taken into account, i.e. educational requirements, which are determined by regulations of the minister responsible for higher education and science in agreement with the minister responsible for the relevant specialisation area. The aim of it is to ensure high quality of education for the profession through the selection of appropriate educational outcomes.

Education within practical studies takes place in contact with a teacher employed at the university, with appropriate qualifications and experience, and other people with the same strengths, increasing the quality of education, and at least 50% of the hours of classes, on a practical profile, are conducted by academic teachers employed at this university as their primary place of work. The remaining people are usually representatives of institutions and enterprises where students carry out work placements. Thus, they educate by developing in student's specific competencies necessary in their chosen profession. These employees are specialists and practitioners in a particular field, which gives students the opportunity to learn about practical solutions, acquire knowledge and, above all, awareness of the link between academic knowledge and professional practice.

3 Work placements

During the course of practical studies, the student undertakes work placements that serve the purpose of acquiring and enriching practical skills. Students' placements are a teaching method aimed at improving the competences of university graduates, which allows them to link theoretical matters with the problems of professional life, helps students gain experience and prepare to enter the labour market [3].

They are aimed at improving competences necessary in the work process. For many students, this is their first experience outside of university. The implementation of work placements by students during studies with a practical profile is preparation for professional work. During the work placement, the student verifies the usefulness of the knowledge and skills acquired during education [4]. In Poland, work placements are a form of cooperation between universities and enterprises. Thanks to them, the student has the opportunity to meet various employers and, above all, confront the expectations with reality. Cooperation between universities and institutions where students carry out work placements is formal cooperation. It is based on a contract or agreement. Fields of study with a practical profile in their curricula may include the existence of a Convention

of Employers who are involved in the development of study programmes and in cooperation related to the placement. For university graduates, the place of student placements often become their place of work in the future [2]. Some students verify their career plans and make radical changes because they have not found their way in a particular profession.

4 Instead of conclusion

Practical/vocational education in Poland is still perceived as at least an "experiment". This state of affairs may be a consequence of the problems of vocational education such as: underfinancing, misalignment of the educational offer with the market needs, lack of modern teaching programmes, low quality of vocational education, depreciation of vocational education in the eyes of society [6].

There are many important aspects that increase the attractiveness of studies with a practical/dual profile, making them more desirable to students themselves. The labour market expects qualified employees with advanced practical skills. In this sense, dual studies meet these expectations by providing an alternative to the general academic profile of studies.

In highly developed societies, the labour market forces changes in the education system. However, despite constantly introduced changes, the offer of studies is still perceived as inflexible and supply-oriented, not taking into account the needs of the labour market.

In a modern education system, it is the employers who should be actively involved in designing attractive fields of study, openly defining expectations for university graduates in the changing labour market. The lack of openness of universities to the changing needs of the labour market may reduce young people's interest in the study offer. Hence, dual education may be an attractive solution and a remedy for these problems and concerns.

References

- [1] Czerepaniak-Walczak M. (red.), *Fabryk dyplomów czy universitas?*, Impuls, Kraków 2013. [Diploma factories or universitas?, Impuls, Krakow 2013]
- [2] Jankowska K., Stach Sz., *Korzyści i oczekiwania studentów wobec stażu i praktyk studenckich*, Uniwersytet Rzeszowski, 2018. [Benefits and expectations of students towards internships and work placements, University of Rzeszów, 2018] <https://repozytorium.uwb.edu.pl/jspui/handle/11320/7147>
- [3] Klimkiewicz K., *Rola praktyk studenckich w doskonaleniu praktycznego aspektu kształcenia studentów uczelni wyższych*, Uniwersytet Ekonomiczny w Katowicach, *Studia ekonomiczne. Zeszyty naukowe* nr 225/2015. [The role of student work placements in improving the practical aspect of educating university students, University of Economics in Katowice, *Economic studies. Scientific journals* no. 225/2015.]
- [4] Marzec B., Borda M., *Rola praktyk studenckich w kształceniu nauczycieli*, *Pedagogik aszkoły wyższej* [The role of student work placements in teachers education, *Higher Education Pedagogy*], 2018, DOI: [10.18276/psw.2018.1-07](https://doi.org/10.18276/psw.2018.1-07)
- [5] Musiał E., Malinowska J. (red.), *Praktyki pedagogiczne przestrzenią miejscem waluacji kompetencji przyszłych nauczycieli wczesnej edukacji: koncepcje, przemiany, rozwiązania*, Instytut Pedagogiki Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego, Wrocław, 2018. [Pedagogical practices as a space and place for the evaluation of the competences of future teachers of early education: concepts, transformations, solutions, Institute of Pedagogy of the University of Wrocław, 2018]
- [6] Osiecka-Chojnacka, J., *Szkolnictwo zawodowe wobec problemów rynku pracy*, *Infos, Zagadnienia społeczno-gospodarcze* 16/2007. [Vocational education and labour market problems, *Infos, Socio-economic issues* 16/2007.]
- [7] Rozporządzenie Ministra Nauki i Szkolnictwa Wyższego z dnia 27 września 2018 r. w sprawie studiów (Dz.U. 2018 poz.1861). [Regulation of the Minister of Science and Higher Education of September 27, 2018 on studies (Journal of Laws 2018, item 1861).]
- [8] Szempruch J., *Teoria i praktyka pedagogiczna w rozwoju zawodowym nauczyciela*, Wrocław, 2018. [Pedagogical theory and practice in teacher's professional development, Wrocław, 2018.] DOI: [10.34616/22.19.020](https://doi.org/10.34616/22.19.020)
- [9] Szwabowski, O., *Uniwersytet Fabryka Maszyn, Uniwersytet w perspektywie radykalnej*, Instytut Wydawniczy „Książka i Prasa”, 2014. [Machinery Factory University, University in a radical perspective, Publishing Institute "Book and Press", 2014.]
- [10] Szyja P., Maciejewski W.: *Kształcenie praktyczne w uczelniach wyższych w ocenie studentów kierunku ekonomia społeczna*, 16(2), 2020. [Universities' practical education in the assessment of students of social economics, 16(2), 2020.] <https://p-e.up.krakow.pl/article/view/7762>
- [11] Ustawa z dnia 18 marca 2011 r. o zmianie ustawy – Prawo o szkolnictwie wyższym, ustawy o stopniach naukowych i tytułach zawodowych w zakresie sztuki oraz o zmianie niektórych innych ustaw (Dz.U. 2011 nr 84, poz. 455). [Act of March 18, 2011 amending the Act - Law on Higher Education, the Act on academic degrees

- and academic titles and on degrees and titles in the field of Art, and amending certain other acts (Journal of Laws 2011, No. 84, item. 455).]
- [12] Ustawa z dnia 20 lipca 2018 r. Prawo o szkolnictwie wyższym (Dz.U. 2018 poz. 742). [Act of July 20, 2018, Law on Higher Education and Science (Journal of Laws of 2018, item 742).]
- [13] Ustawa z dnia 18 marca 2011 r. o zmianie ustawy – Prawo o szkolnictwie wyższym, ustawy o stopniach naukowych i tytułach naukowych oraz o zmianie niektórych innych ustaw (Dz.U. 2011 nr 84, poz. 455). [Act of March 18, 2011 amending the Act - Law on Higher Education, the Act on academic degrees and titles and on degrees and titles in the field of Art, and amending certain other acts (Journal of Laws 2011, No. 84, item. 455).]
- [14] Wróblewska W., Karpińska A., Remża P. (red.), Edukacja zorientowana na nauczyciela i studenta, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu w Białymstoku, Białystok 2021, [Teacher and student oriented education, University of Białystok, Publishing House Białystok, 2021] DOI: [10.15290/eznuis.2021](https://doi.org/10.15290/eznuis.2021)
- [15] Zawada P., Kształcenie dualne czy zawodowe – przygotowanie osób młodych wchodzących na rynek pracy na podstawie świadectw zarządzających, wyniesionych z funkcjonowania wybranych firm w SSE Jasionka: Edukacja, Technika, Informatyka, nr 1/23/2018, DOI: [10.15584/eti.2018.1.20](https://doi.org/10.15584/eti.2018.1.20) [Dual or vocational education - preparation of young people entering the labour market based on managerial experience gained from the operation of selected companies in Jasionka Special Economic Zones: Education, Technology, IT, No. 1/23/2018, DOI: 10.15584 /eti.2018.1.20]