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THE HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEM IN POLAND

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I. General Characterization of Educational System in Poland

a. The Pathway to University

Access to the kindergarten is the first component in the school system. In Poland, children from 3 to 6 attend kindergarten with the special distinction that the last year is similar to school work.

The basis of all Polish school systems since 1966 has been eight-form primary school. This basic education contains the principle knowledge of nature and society, the preliminary acquaintance of pupils with techniques and preparation for participation in the social, economic and cultural life of the country.

The next stage of education is the secondary school. In this group there are two visible distinctions based on duration of learning and the programme of teaching. The most typical stage between the primary school and university is a four-year secondary school of general education. The second form of post-primary education is the two or three-year vocational school. There are as well the four or five-year secondary technological schools/or secondary vocational schools which admit children after 8 forms of primary school and also the two-year post-secondary school colleges.

Moreover there are the three-year technical secondary school studies on the ground of basic vocational schools.

Most post-primary studies are undertaken in the basic vocational schools.

b. Higher Education system in Poland

Higher education system in Poland contains the following categories of university schools (the numbers of university schools are given for the school year 1988/89):

- Universities	11
- Technical University of Engineering	18
- Academy of Medicine	11
- Academy of Economics	6
- Academy of Agriculture	9
- Pedagogical University schools	10
- = Pedagogical Colleges	
- Academy of Physical Training	6
- Merchant Navy Academy	2
- Academy of Fine Arts	17
- Academy of Theology	2

The condition for admission to the university schools is a certificate of completion in the secondary school and the achievement of credits during entrance examinations provided for in the given study areas.

Table 1 contains the data on the development of higher education system in Poland in the years 1945/46 = 1988/89 in respect to the number of university schools, number of students and number of graduates.

Table I - The Development of University School System in Poland

Academic Year	Number of schools	Number of students in thousands	Number of graduates in thousands
1	2	3	4
1937/38	32	49.5	6.1
1945/46	46	56.0	3.9
1950/51	83	125.0	21.7
1955/56	78	157.5	26.5
1960/61	75	165.7	20.5
1965/66	76	251.9	25.2
1970/71	85	330.8	46.9
1975/76	89	464.9	62.7
1980/81	91	453.7	84.0
1985/86	92	340.7	59.7
1986/87	92	334.5	59.9
1987/88	92	342.6	55.3
1988/89	92	356.4	49.8

Sources: Tadeusz J Wiloch, A school system. State Scientific Edition, Warsaw 1977, p 93 and Rocznik Statystyczny = Statistical Year Book, Chief Central Statistical Office, Warsaw 1989, p459

The intramural studies of 4 to 5 years are a fundamental form of university instruction and education. The university schools offer also courses aimed at working students: evening studies, correspondence (ie. extramural) studies and also "part-time" studies. The structure of university schools, in respect to the number of students is illustrated in Table II.

Table II. The Forms of University Studies - number of students in 1988/89 school year in thousands

Form of Studies	Intramural Studies	Evening Studies	Extramural Studies	Part-time Studies
Number of students	272.5	1.9	80.4	1.6

A university course includes the completion and defence of a master's degree thesis after which the graduate has completed the full and complete university education. Even if the student has all credits in all examinations without having prepared and written a master's thesis his university education is not complete. Universities also have postgraduate studies for the graduates who are in employment and are able, in this way, to put their theoretical knowledge and education into practice.

An essential matter is also the staff potential of the Polish university system. During the academic year 1988/89 in all university's in Poland the breakdown of academic teachers was as follows:

Professors	3 867
Assistant Professors	6 315
Tutors	22 607
Assistant Lecturers	9 201
Assistants	42 502
The remaining	12 900

The university schools, besides the realization of the tasks connected with the education of students, are appointed to conduct scientific research.

It should also be emphasized that the university educational system in Poland until now has been financed in principle, exclusively from the state budget. There is no fee paid by the students for their education. A considerable proportion of students receive so-called social grants, the amount of which depends on the material situation and conditions of their families.

II The System of Higher Economic Education in Poland

When presenting a system of education of managers in Poland it should be underlined at the beginning that the great majority of managers in Polish industry are engineers and that only 74 percent of managerial posts in production and in administration are occupied by university graduates.

In Poland there was no system of management education in the sense of separated educational routes within the framework of which the selected candidates would obtain qualifications for their future profession.

In the existing model of promotion to the post of manager, higher education is gradually becoming an essential element but it is not the most important. Many directors had completed their university studies by the extramural studies several years after their promotion. Education has obtained its importance only during the last two decades, especially at the end of the last decade, when qualifications replaced the criterion of belonging to the "Party". This does not, however, mean the definitive solution to the problem of appointments to managerial posts.

The second reservation concerns the fact that the notion of "manager" was alien and unfamiliar to the Polish economy. With the absence of a market economy and of independent enterprise, with the limited application of economics, the notion "manager" did not exist but only the notion "superior-employee". Economic education was frequently identified with "indoctrination".

The reconstruction of the social and economic system in Poland, begun in 1990, requires a change in the educational model for economists and managers, which in its essence is currently a continuation of the model created during the fifties. The university economic schools have begun work on generally changing the system but to date there are no spectacular results. We present here the current state of affairs.

1. Higher Economic Education

a) Economic Education Network

In Poland there are five academic schools - Academies of Economics - which educate economists. These Academies are in Warsaw, Poznan, Wroclaw, Katowice and in Cracaw and together form 60 percent of the total number of students of economic studies. Besides these main centres there are currently also the faculties or economic sections at the universities in Warsaw, Gdansk, Szczecin, Torun, Lodz and in Lublin, and the branches, outside faculties and other university schools leading economic sections. There are therefore in total 17 centres teaching and educating economists in Poland. Of this number, seven centres are the greater academic centres comprise 7 to 13 university schools; a further seven centres comprise 3-6 schools and 3 centres are quite small, having only one to two higher schools.

Thus one sees a tendency in the Polish education system for economic education to be concentrated in the greatest academic centres because they are located in the largest municipal and industrial agglomerations. Given the shortage of economic staff in certain regions of the country - particularly in the eastern provinces - the centres are too small with a relatively low level of staffing.

The structure of this educational specialisations in the economic schools is very varied. Economic training and education can be obtained within the framework of thirteen faculties or sections of studies and in twenty-three specialist sections. There are no institutions which offer all faculties. The widest range is provided by the Academy of Economics in Poznan which operates nine sections of studies with thirteen specializations. The remaining large centres have seven to eight faculties with seven to eleven specializations. The range offered by other centres is more modest: two to five faculties of studies.

In Poland there are students of economics studying at the following faculties:

1. Economic - social sections / eleven centres - 9.8% of students.
2. General economics / one centre.
3. Economic cybernetics and informatics / nine centres - 7.1%.
4. Planning and financing of national economy / nine centres - 7.3%.
5. Organization and management / eight centres - 8.9% of students.
6. Economics and organization of production / fourteen centres - 24.4% of students.
7. Economics and organization of trade / nine centres - 15.4%.
8. Economics and organization of foreign trade / five centres - 10.1%.
9. Economics and organization of transport / five centres - 9.4% of students.
10. Science of commodities / two centres.
11. Economics and organization of food industry / one centre.
12. Economics and organization of chemical industry / one centre.

The existing system of faculties is dictated by criteria for the appointment of staff laid down by the chief Council of Higher Education Systems. At least six professors or assistant professors employed in full time are required to manage one section of studies and at least three specialisations. During periods of short staffing enrolment for a given section is suspended. This favours the realization of the specialization of the schools in the chosen faculties.

In terms of the sectional structure of education two areas dominate: economics and production organization and economics and organization of trade, which account for 40 percent of the total number of students. The remaining faculties do not show greater disproportions, only the faculties of economic-technical and natural characters, which do not exceed 4 percent of number of students.

b. The students

Students of economics account for 10% of the total numbers of students in Poland. The tendency for an increase in economics, notably at the cost of technological studies, began in the early seventies when the disadvantages of the technocratisation of education first became apparent.

At present there are 35,000 students in the various economic faculties, of which nearly 70% are full-time. The remaining students are part-time. Evening courses are not a popular mode of study, accounting for 1%. There is also a marked decrease in the percentage of part-time students.

The level of full-time candidates for economics is improving. For example, in 1989, 58% of candidates taking the entrance examinations, obtained high marks. The average for all university schools is 52%. The number of those wishing to study was greater than the number of available places. Only 88% of those who passed the entrance examinations were admitted to the first year of studies. However, it is becoming more and more popular to study as "free students". These are candidates who, after having passed the entrance examination, may take the place of those eliminated during the first year.

The final pass-rate in the economic school system is somewhat lower than the national average. In full-time studies, 81% of students pass to the next year of studies (the national average is 82%). Of course, the pass rate is higher in the later years of studies, than at the beginning. There is a high throughput in full-time studies (82%) although the level of education is generally considered to be lower.

Depending on the faculty, economics courses last four to five years. Full-time studies are consecutive while part-time studies are in two stages. The first degree, lasting three years, has a professional character, and finishes with the title of 'Graduate Economist', the second degree is in the form of "supplementary studies" giving the Master's title after three

further years. Thus the part-time studies last in total six years. It is worth underlining that they do not exist in all faculties.

c. Staff

Academic teachers in Poland belong to three fundamental groups. The first and most important are the professors and assistant professors, also called independent research workers. To be promoted to that group it is necessary to have the Second Doctorate. Only teachers in this group can lead seminars for students preparing their Master's, Doctoral or Second Doctoral Thesis. The size of this group of teachers, therefore, has a direct influence on all functions in the university schools: training, scientific development and research.

Professors and assistant professors account for 16.3% of the academic personnel in economic schools, which is similar to all university schools in Poland. Nevertheless, this state of affairs was reached only recently. Currently nearly thirty five titles of professors in the field of economics are conferred annually.

The distribution of teaching allocated to professors and assistant professors in the economics school system varies greatly. The Central School of Planning and Statistics in Warsaw (149) has the greatest number of research assistants; the remaining academies have from sixty to eighty professors and assistant professors. In other economics schools this number varies from fifty eight to three. When we take into consideration the number of students the differentiation increases more. On average, for each professor and assistant professor, in economics, there are nearly forty students (in university schools in Poland near thirty students.) However the ratios vary greatly (from 5,0 to 313,0). The differences also vary greatly between the schools and between particular faculties.

The second group of academic teachers comprises the lecturers, tutors and other research assistants. This group is required to develop their scientific qualifications in rotation. The assistants are required to obtain the scientific degree of doctor in a maximum of eight years, and they obtain, in virtue of this doctor degree, an advancement to a higher post of tutor/lecturer. The lecturers have to prepare and to publish the habilitation thesis and to pass the habilitation examination within nine years.

Lecturers and assistants account for 63% of academic teachers in economic schools. This has changed frequently in the past. At the beginning of the seventies, as a result of development of economics there was an unexpected increase in the number of assistants. The effect of this policy was an increase in the number of doctorates economics. The number has fallen over the years 1976-1978 and recently there has been an increase in the number of second doctorates. In recent years, there have been near 190 degrees of doctorates conferred in economics and near fifty second doctorates.

It is worth adding, that the academic doctorate degree or second doctorate is obtained most frequently by the teachers who, under the direction of a professor, write proper academic thesis based on original research. Besides this traditional form those who are there are also the doctor's degree, taken by people outside the universities. Doctoral studies in economic schools were most popular in 1978, but from that time their popularity has declined and at present is very low, although greater than in other types of schools.

The third group of academic teachers comprises a variety of posts: lecturers, instructors, foreign language assistants, teachers of physical training in short, the workers who are occupied principally with teaching. Since 1982 there has been drop in the numbers of lectures, but on the other hand, an increase in lectors and teachers of physical training.

d. **Study programmes.**

In the traditional model of economic studies, which has dominated until today, the contents of education programmes are based on the idea "from the general to the particular". According to this principle, the objectives of the curriculum can be grouped in the following way:

- general education
- general professional education
- sectional specializing and specialist education

This system generally reflects the sequence in the cycle of education i.e. the common foundation programme generally takes place in the first two years.

In the majority of schools traditional didactic methods are employed with the aim of transferring knowledge, thus responding more to the question "how?" than to "why?" and computers remain rather role playing, a proposal rather than a reality.

The main defect in economics study programmes is a tendency towards the unification of general matters, instead of their profiling in dependence on the faculty. Moreover their localization at the beginning years of studies, make difficult their perception and by this reason they make the obstacle to next subjects. Therefore at the last years of studies there are introduced the monographic courses to choose or the conversations from general and generally professional matters to counteract these phenomena.

In spite of numerous past reforms in economics students are still educated according to the old model because curriculum and syllabus changes still contain out of date material.

The most evident proof of this phenomenon is the persistence over more than forty years of the universally criticized specializing and sectional structure of studies, which is a reflection of branch system of economy.

Criticism of the existing model of economic education is not new. The schools of economics lag behind changes in the economy and in social life. It is likely that radical changes to the educational system will be fraught with difficulty because changes in the structure of faculties and specializations in higher schools threaten the interests of particular units and individuals.

e. The graduates, postgraduate studies

In 1989 the economic studies were completed by about six thousand graduates, among them, about the half has completed the extramural studies.

There are no systematic analyses of employment of graduates, nevertheless, on the base of various researches and inquiries, one can confirm that up until now they have had no difficulty in obtaining employment and have relatively rapidly obtained promotion. Nevertheless, the degree of compatibility between the field of studies and the final work destination is very low (approximately 17%).

Graduates are, to a certain extent convinced of the unique character of the studies they undertake, nevertheless they are aware of the lack of specialized knowledge. Moreover, they appreciate the importance of continuing education of which the preferred forms are short courses and self-education. There is a small number of graduates interested in postgraduate and doctorate studies.

Of the total number of students on postgraduate courses 12 percent are located in economic universities. In 1989

postgraduate studies in the field of economics were completed by more than 1,500.

The share of economic schools in the leading doctorate studies is still greater. Nearly 60% of participants of that form of studies - are at economic schools.

f. Changes called for in the economic education system.

Independently of whether the role of the state in the economy will be firmly limited, or whether state intervention in the economic schools will prevail, structural changes are called for in programmes and teaching methodology. The uncertainty over that scale and speed of change in the economic system means that at present the higher schools take different attitudes toward those changes.

The most important features of economic education in the future will have to be:

- innovation and attitude towards the future
- interdisciplinary measures
- individualization of education programmes
- continuing instruction and education

The economic university school system has to educate graduates who will be professionally active over the next forty years. That is to say that the process of modernization of the education system will particularly depend on the motivation and capability of teaching staff in the field of forecasting and understanding the social and economic conditions in which graduates will be working.

Study programmes of studies will also have to stress competence. The question is, among others, of the knowledge which distinguishes an economist from other professions. Greater attention than hitherto, has to be paid to competence training

based on analysis and choice, given that this is a condition for efficient action. The chance for the realization of desired changes in the education and in the formation of economists could be created by greater autonomy of schools which is strictly connected with the change of the system of financing the university schools. The intensification of competition between the existing and newly created schools should contribute to ti.

The process of creating and organizing schools for managers (business schools) has begun over the last two years and there are already some schools of this type. Given the short period of their existence and the small scale of their activity it is not yet possible to estimate their success. It is, however, certain that the number of such schools will increase rapidly.