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Continuity and Change: The Academic Teacher-Student Relationships in the Discourse on the Higher Education Reform in Poland

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Keywords

Higher Education, Academic Discourse, Post-Foucauldian Discourse Analysis, Academic Teacher, Student

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Continuity and Change: The Academic Teacher-Student Relationships in the Discourse on the Higher Education Reform in Poland

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Abstract

The article presents the results of research on the discursive models of academic relationships that come to the fore in the academic discourse on the reform of higher education in Poland. The aim of the research was to capture the ways of formulating knowledge about the reform of science and higher education and its subjects (i.e., academic teachers and students). The research material comprised 17 Polish academic monographs published in the years 2011-2014 (immediately after the introduction of the higher education reform in Poland). The direction of the analyses was emergent and inductive and was in line with the assumptions of post-Foucauldian discourse analysis. The theoretical basis was determined by the set of categories that constitute the phenomenon of the "formation of knowledge." The main research problem was expressed by the question about what "truths" about the reform of science and higher education, its main subjects (academic teachers and students), and the relationships between them emerge from the analysed discourse. The research has led to the reconstruction of discursive models of academic teachers (traditional professor, docile workhorse, and hopeless practitioner) and students (student *sensu stricto*, client, disobedient citizen).

Keywords: Higher Education, Academic Discourse, Post-Foucauldian Discourse Analysis, Academic Teacher, Student

Introduction

In this article, we present selected results of the studies conducted as part of the research project "Governmentality of University - a Discursive Image of the Contemporary Reform of Higher Education in Poland" financed from the grant of the National Science Centre in Poland in the years 2015-2019. We show how knowledge (ideas, beliefs, notions) about the reform of higher education in Poland and its main subjects (academic teachers and students) is formulated at the level of academic discourse. We focus on the discursive constructions of "truths" about the academic teacher-student relationships in the context of the change experienced by the academic community. Undoubtedly, the phenomenon of "university transformation" observed over the past twenty years is deep and radical (see Antonowicz, 2015; Bauer, Askling, Marton, & Marton, 1992; Czerepaniak-Walczak, 2013b; Górniewicz & Piotrowski, 2014; Kostkiewicz, Domagała-Krędzioch, & Szymański, 2011a; Kościelniak & Makowski, 2011; Kwiek, 2011a, 2011b, Melosik, 2009; Slaughter & Leslie, 1997; Sułkowski, 2016). Problems related to the financing of universities by the state, the development of competitive and market-driven educational institutions, with a simultaneous emphasis on the egalitarianization of higher education and commercialization of research, are just some of the indicators of change contributing to the collapse of the Humboldtian model of the university (Górniewicz &

Piotrowski, 2014; Nowakowska-Siuta, 2018). The principles of the "unity of knowledge and science, unity of research and education, unity of professors and students, freedom and academic autonomy, unity of the spirit of the nation" introduced by the German philosopher (Sułkowski, 2016, p. 14) clashed with the directives of the corporate-managerial management system, and "academic culture based on trust" was subordinated to the rules of "audit culture" (Kulczycki, 2017; Ostrowicka, Spychalska-Stasiak, & Stankiewicz, 2020; Shore & Wright, 2015a, 2015b). The academic "ivory tower" has opened to the needs and expectations of new stakeholders (employers, representatives of local communities, businessmen, and politicians). The *Bildung* concept is replaced by the idea of knowledge that is practically useful, used, and often generated, by representatives of industry, business, or economics (Antonowicz, 2012; Kościelniak & Makowski, 2011). The "privatization of teaching," deriving its sources from the dynamic development of private universities in Europe, results in disconnecting research from teaching (Bartkowiak & Barska, 2008; Kwiek, 2008; Zelek & Grzesiuk, 2008). The student-master relationship is transformed into a one-way learning process, transmitting knowledge from the professor to the student. The latter becomes an important link in the academic game, often determining the amount of university income, as well as the position of the university on the educational market (Pauluk 2010, 2016). In turn, the concept of research and the teaching autonomy of academics gives way to the organized control system, introducing into the current academic routine the requirement of research and teaching perfection, scrupulously measured and evaluated according to the achieved effects (Kulczycki, 2017). There is, therefore, no doubt that the transition noted in the literature of the subject has left its mark on nearly every aspect of academic culture - from the recommended ways to manage the university, through the modification of goals, conditions and methods of education, to the radical change of intentions accompanying academic cognition. The context of the planned and implemented reform, generating numerous and diverse problematizations, intensified the (re)production of knowledge about the university, thus triggering the phenomenon of public debate about its condition (Dziedziczak-Foltyn, 2017; Ostrowicka & Stankiewicz, 2019; Stankiewicz, 2018, 2019). Its beginning should be considered to have been the years 2008-2010, when the then Minister of Science and Higher Education Barbara Kudrycka began legislative work on introducing a new reform. Its apogee fell in the year 2011, when the Polish parliament voted for the implementation of the new law. From this point on, the neoliberal, that is, economicized, formalized, and bureaucratized direction of change has become a hotly debated fact. Both the voices of acknowledgement and fierce criticism come not only from university employees, but also from students and doctoral students, representatives of the labour market, business, politics, and the media (Kwiek, 2017; Ostrowicka & Stankiewicz, 2019).

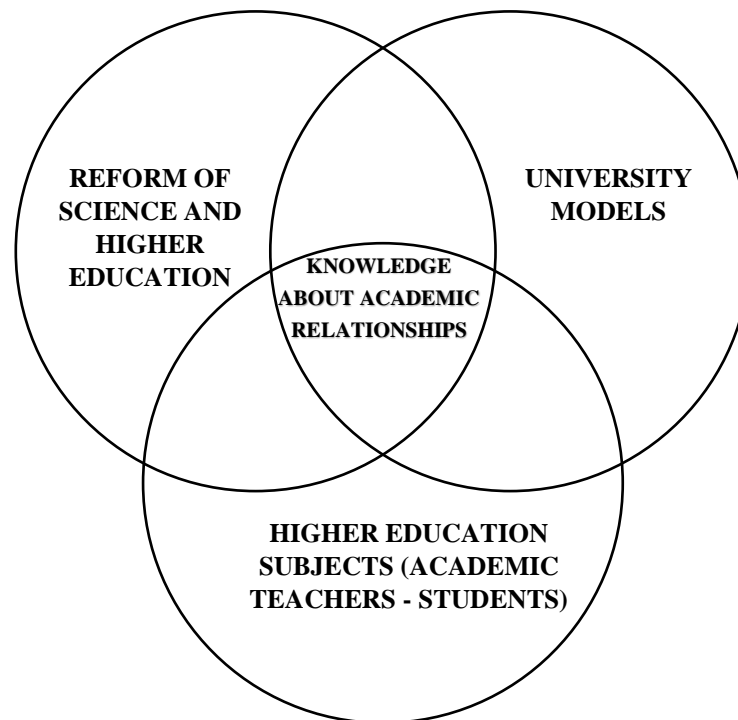
In the years 2015-2019, Jarosław Gowin, the subsequent Minister of Science and Higher Education in Poland, has been implementing the next reform, called "Law 2.0." Its revolutionary and radical character, associated with the introducing breakthrough administrative, economic, didactic, and scientific solutions, would not have been possible without preparing the ground in earlier years. This happened largely in public debate, in which since 2008 the problems of massification of higher education, teachers' multi-jobbing, and the low quality at private higher education institutions have been discussed (Stankiewicz & Ostrowicka, 2020). The reform of Barbara Kudrycka in 2011 is considered to be the beginning of changes that attempt to meet the neoliberal demands formulated in the public space.

At that time (2011-2014), the discursive movement is intensified, numerous publications are created, conferences and symposia are organized (Ostrowicka & Okońska 2019). The university crisis is announced in the media and in academics' statements, and the issue of the quality of academic education becomes one of the basic indicators confirming its existence (Bloom, 2012; Czerepaniak-Walczak, 2013b; Denek, 2011b; Readings, 1996). Changes in the acquisition and improvement of knowledge are a critical element of the

discussion on the cultural, social, and economic effects of changes affecting modern universities. The characteristics of academic relationships intersect with general considerations, beliefs, and ideas about their direction. The discourse we are interested in is a compilation of three complementary levels of expression regarding (1) the reform of science and higher education (*reform as time, space, opportunity to improve the condition of higher education, and the driving force of discourse*), (2) changes in the university model (*the university as a temple of knowledge – the university as a factory of knowledge*), and (3) academic relationships (*traditional professor, docile workhorse, teacher prevaricator v. student sensu stricto, client, disobedient citizen*) (cf. Figure 1.).

Figure 1

Planes of the formation of knowledge about academic relationships



By renouncing the tendency to think in terms of “cause-effect,” in the article we outline a map of the most important shifts, tensions, and vibrations corresponding to the change of relationships at the university.

The presented article is divided into two basic parts. We begin with the characterization of the adopted research assumptions to further discuss the results of the analysis of academics’ statements about the reform experienced by them and issues related to the changing roles and educational relationships within academia.

Research assumptions

The main subject of our research is the *formations of knowledge* about the academic teacher-student relationship constructed in the context of the reform of higher education in Poland. As a concept close to Foucauldian discursive formations, knowledge formations are exposed by the epistemological understanding of discourse, according to which knowledge is a space of coexistence and dependence of statements (Ostrowicka, 2019). The analysis of knowledge formation makes it possible to treat the Polish discourse on the reform of science

and higher education as a local exemplification of trends occurring globally. Changes in the financing of higher education, along with increased control of the quality of activities undertaken, highlighting the role of rankings and strategies based on competition (see Kwiek, 2006; Ostrowicka, Spsychalska-Stasiak, & Stankiewicz, 2020; Pitton, 2007; Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004;), are only some of the indicators of international trends modifying the shape of local educational discourses and strategic inclusion of universities in the discourse of the knowledge-based economy, crucial for the EU strategic documents (i.e., the Lisbon Strategy and Europe 2020). In the Polish system, these changes are related to implementation of the recommendations of European institutions (European Union and OECD): the introduction of the National Qualification Framework and centralization of control of educational results, and the implementation of New Public Management mechanisms, well known in other Western systems (see Lane, 2000). One of the areas susceptible to modifications are the academic relations, connected with the changing status of the teacher/scientist and the student. In Poland before 1989, the position of the latter, in accordance with the Humboldt model, was not high. A significant reconceptualization of both the status of a student and that of an academic teacher began during the debate on higher education reform, commenced in 2008.

The results of our research, although limited in time and territory, allow us to present global trends present in a specific historical context, contributing to a deeper understanding of the mechanisms shaping modern higher education. The reconstruction of “truths” about academic relationships is based on an analysis of the scientific discourse *sensu stricto*, construed by Stanisław Gajda (1993, 1999) as one of the basic (next to scientific for the general public and conference) types of scientific discourse, aimed at disseminating the effects of scientific work. Its special feature is respect for both the ethos (system of values and standards) and the principles and style of scientific writing. This definition of the research object makes it possible for us to include in the analysis only those statements that were made by representatives of science and higher education institutions who comply with the requirements of academic expression (Becker, 2013; Maćkiewicz, 2010; Mikołajczak, 1990). Table 1 presents their synthetic characteristics.

Table 1

Characteristics of the analysed materials in terms of gender, academic degree/title and represented area of knowledge

GENDER			ACADEMIC DEGREE / TITLE				KNOWLEDGE AREA			
F	M	Σ	MA	PHD	PROFESSOR	Σ	HUMANITIES	SOCIAL SCIENCES	SCIENCES	TECHNOLOGICAL SCIENCES
59	69	128	49	35	21	105	2	65	4	2

Therefore, the empirical basis for the analyses is determined by a collection of 17 academic monographs (8 original and 9 published under editorship), published in the years 2011-2014 (i.e., directly after the introduction of the reform in question) and thematically related to the area of science and higher education. The collected analytical material is therefore located between two important episodes of reforms in the sector of science and higher education in Poland. While Barbara Kudrycka’s reform, introduced in 2011-2014, is a thing of the past, the problematizations of the so-called “Law 2.0” (introduced between 2015 and 2019) occur “on the fly,” as a result of clashing with the changes that result from its formative assumptions. In this sense, the analysis of materials published in 2011-2014 is an important

prelude to a deeper understanding of the discourse on the current condition of science and higher education in Poland. It is worth noting that it is the reform of Barbara Kudrycka that is considered to be the beginning of neoliberal changes and as such has triggered a hitherto unknown phenomenon of public discussion of internal problems of universities. The analysis of discursive practices created on this basis makes it possible to understand the experienced process of “transformation of the university” in terms of its continuity and change. For this reason, it is subordinated to the assumptions of post-Foucauldian discourse analysis, using the French thinker’s philosophical achievements in the practice of empirical research (Nowicka-Franczak, 2017; Ostrowicka, 2017, 2019). The adopted methodology is based on “strategic logic” (Foucault, 2008), in which diversity does not exclude coexistence, interpenetration, and connection. According to this principle, the effect of the reconstruction of “truths” about the reform of higher education and the academic teacher-student relationship is not to indicate completely separate and mutually exclusive structures of knowledge, but to show different but interpenetrating ways of problematization (cf. Ostrowicka, 2019). As “points of reference” in the analysed discourse, we used specific elements of knowledge formations (i.e., the surfaces of emergence of the subject of discourse, instances of delimitation, and grids of specification of statements). The *surfaces of emergence* of discourse relate to spaces in which certain reform-related practices have become the object of knowledge about educational relationships and the object of academics’ interest. In turn, *instances of delimitation* refer to authorities who have the power to separate, mark, and describe individuals. Questions are asked here about who (what subjects) or what (what discourses) define certain phenomena as scientific problems. Another rule describes the establishment of discourse objects by placing them in *grids of specification* according to which objects are separated, combined, grouped, and classified according to their selected properties. In our research, *grids of specification* are the “truths” about the reform, which served as criteria for differentiating and categorizing statements about teachers, students, and relationships between them (cf. Foucault, 1972; Ostrowicka, 2015, 2019).

The main direction of the conducted research is inductive and emergent. Its starting point is the question about what “truths” about the reform of science and higher education, its main subjects (academic teachers and students), and the relationships between them emerge from the analysed discourse.

As a result of an inductive analysis of the text materials using the Atlas.ti software, a set of categories (and corresponding fragments of statements) was created, which include codes/subcategories related to, on the one hand, the reform and descriptions of the academic teacher and on the other, the student. The “reform” category includes such subcategories as: “time,” “space,” “hope,” “disillusion,” and “driving force.” The “relationships” category includes: “teacher,” “professor,” “academic teacher,” “researcher,” “student.” In the next part, we present the results of our research divided into three sections, related to the debate as the basic surface of emergence of the subject of discourse, (post)positivist and activist discourses as instances of the delimitation of statements, and “truths” about the reform as grids of specification of discourse about educational relationships (i.e., teacher-student).

Results

In this discussed discourse, the narration on the subject of science and higher education reform emerges from academic considerations about the *debate* as a practice rooted in academic tradition:

It is especially higher education institutions that should constitute a space for debate, which can sometimes take the form of protest or strike, and also be a

school of civic involvement and active social attitude. (Jakubowski, 2013, p. 142)

The responsibility for social tensions has been shifted to universities, while awaiting ready solutions of system aporias. The educational function of the university is becoming secondary, placing it in the central space of social debate. (Nawój-Połoczańska, 2013, p. 152)

The belief that representatives of academia have a special mandate to comment on the reform results from their unlimited access to both formal (related to the role of a university employee) and social (resulting from being a member of the academic community) beliefs, ideas, and knowledge about its assumptions, implementation, and experienced effects. This is evidenced by the figure of “a man from inside the university” appearing in the discourse, who is testing and experiencing, in a way “personally,” the changes implemented by politicians (Spychalska-Stasiak, 2019b). His participation in the debate aims to develop their collective sense and possible ways of interpretation:

To some extent, in response to signals from the world of politics, in post-industrial reality discussions about models of operation and the role of universities in the face of changing social conditions have attracted more and more attention. Both in public debates and, and perhaps above all, in academic considerations and discussions as well as in the research conducted as part of social sciences, descriptions have appeared which characterize the new way of functioning of academic institutions. (Musiał, 2011, p. 256)

The reform of science and higher education carried out two years ago gave rise to numerous discussions on the rightness and purposefulness of the changes introduced, and as well prompted questions and doubts as to whether the chosen direction of the new solutions is good, and whether it would bring visible benefits to Polish society and to the world of science. (Pakowska, 2013, p. 205)

The implementation of such an objective is hampered, however, by the atmosphere of mistrust discernible in the discourse for a debate, which is identified with a “corrective tool” and constitutes “space for keeping an eye on each other”:

The debate, as a result of which discrepancies in the interests of various milieux would be revealed, should serve the correction and agreement of the reform design and mobilization of public opinion support. (Dziedziczak-Foltyn, 2011, p. 102)

It is worth appreciating the various voices appearing in the discussion on the development of higher education, because only in this way can we learn to use this “corrective device” to repair policy errors, which are reforms and modified law. (Dziedziczak-Foltyn, 2011, pp. 96-97)

In practice, as OECD experts have stated, there is a lack of substantive national debate on educational policy in Poland; instead, we are mainly debating technical reforms in the administration of higher education. On the one hand, it is hardly surprising, since, generally speaking, the weaknesses of the lawmaking system in Poland are the scarcity and superficiality of public consultations, and

public debate is in a very unsatisfactory condition, or even a crisis. (Dziedziczak-Foltyn, 2011, p. 96)

For this reason, the “truths” emerging from the analysed discourse¹ on the reform of science and higher education are diverse and even mutually exclusive. In this study, they play the role of *grids of specification* of statements about academic teachers, students and their relationships. However, before we discuss the key issues for the problem, it is worth stopping for a moment on the issue of the development of scientific discourse, which sparked and became the driving force of the reform of the system.

Reform as a driving force of academic discourse

Our analyses reveal academics’ interest in the research supervision of the changes introduced in higher education. Its basic tool is the research practice of producing diverse types of knowledge about the planned and experienced reform and its basic beneficiaries. In the analysed discourse, knowledge about the academic teacher-student relationship takes two forms: scientific (*episteme*) and popular (*doxa*).

The *episteme type of knowledge* is associated with the need to provide proof of its validity. Therefore, it arises directly from the academic practice of conducting scientific research, using both quantitative and qualitative strategy of data collection and analysis. The mechanics of certifying its legitimacy is associated with the procedure of intersubjective communication and the verifiability of research results. Its authority is founded on the basis of scientifically legitimized knowledge (*de facto*). A teacher perceived in the categories of an heir of a great intellectual tradition, who fulfils the role of “an expert in a specific field of human creation, an appraiser, a person competent to resolve interpersonal conflicts, or those between various institutions, as well as court disputes, is involved in the production of knowledge (Górniewicz & Piotrowski, 2014, p. 125).

The *doxa type of knowledge* is not subject to the true-false criterion (Woleński, 2014). It has the nature of useful knowledge, maintained by collective consensus as to the validity of its standing. Its authority is consolidated by the voice of the people (*de vox populi*). Judgements produced as part of it are legitimized within the individual experience of the subject, the evidence of which is an “internal intuitive insight, a stir of faith, or a simple sense of obviousness” (Bińczyk, 2013, p. 315). Knowledge of this type is revealed in the statements analysed by us from the memories of our own studies, or in our subjective convictions about the specificity of working with students. They manifest themselves through expressions such as: “I often have the opportunity to observe,” “personally, I think that,” “I remember perfectly from my studies in the 1970s,” “the second noticeable effect of constantly keeping an eye on academics is.” The types of knowledge found in scientific discourse, its sources, and strategies of legitimization are presented in Table 2.

¹ A detailed description of the truths about science and higher education reform can be found in the paper by Sychalska-Stasiak and Ostrowicka (2020). “Academic Discourse: Formations of Knowledge about the Reform,” in Ostrowicka, Sychalska-Stasiak, and Stankiewicz’s *Dispositif of the University Reform. Higher Education Policy Discourse in Poland* (Routledge, 2020). In this article, aimed at tracing the links between statements about the reform and the discursive structure of the academic teacher-student relationship, we paid attention only to those “truths” that correspond with the description of changes in the relationship we are interested in. In turn, a detailed description of the discourse on educational relationships along with their more empirical exemplifications is found in the chapter: Sychalska-Stasiak (2019a), “Universitas Studiorum? An Analysis of the Formation of Knowledge about the Academic Teacher-Student Relationship,” in Ostrowicka, Sychalska-Stasiak, Stankiewicz, Chomik, Falkowski, and Rzyńska’s *Dyskursywny obraz reformy szkolnictwa wyższego w Polsce. 2011-2014*. [The Discursive Image of the Reform of Higher Education in Poland 2011-2014] Warsaw: WN PWN.

Table 2

Types of knowledge appearing in scientific discourse, its sources and strategies of legitimization (source: our own study based on: Bińczyk, 2013; Greenwood & Levin 2009; Paprzycka, 2013; Woleński, 2015)

TYPES OF KNOWLEDGE IN THE SCIENTIFIC DISCOURSE	○ <i>Episteme</i> type of knowledge	○ <i>Doxa</i> type of knowledge
SOURCES	○ Research ○ Objectivist model of science	○ Scientific essay writing ○ Subjectivist model of science
STRATEGY FOR THE DISCURSIVE LEGITIMIZATION OF KNOWLEDGE	○ <i>De facto</i> authority	○ <i>De vox populi</i> authority
	○ Intersubjective knowledge certification procedures ○ Subjective evidence of the subject affected by the reform of science and higher education	○ An intersubjectively shared set of data, information, and reasons articulated in the public communication process

In the academic practice of producing knowledge about the teacher-student relationship, two types of scientific discourse come to the fore, that is, (post)positivist and activist (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2018; Creswell, 2013; Crotty, 2015; Lincoln, Lynham & Guba, 2011). *(Post)positivist discourse* is founded on the basis of classically defined truth. The direction of scientific reasoning is deductive and leads to the nomothetic explanation and description of facts occurring in the science and higher education sector. The procedure for generating and reporting knowledge is subordinated to the assumptions of a quantitative strategy for collecting and analysing data. Subjective opinions and convictions of the respondents are subject to statistical generalization, expressed in the form of numbers. The language of the generated description is factually and logically ordered, accurate, and devoid of the “individualized view of the researcher.” Becoming part of the model of an “uninvolved researcher” (Guba & Lincoln, 2009), the latter hides his worldview in a text created in the third person singular (Spsychalska-Stasiak, 2019a).

Activist discourse is focused on creating individualized representations of the meanings and senses imparted by representatives of the academic community to both the reform and the specificity of the resulting changes. The logic of academic reasoning is inductive and comes from the analysis of experiences, emotions, and desires. Explanation takes an idiographic form, subordinated to a qualitative strategy for collecting and analysing data. Language is an element normalizing and evaluating the analysed phenomena. It is a tool of open sharing one’s own thoughts on the changes experienced with the participants in the university community. The voice of an “uninvolved researcher” collides with the story of a “passionate participant in events” or a “transformative intellectual” expressing his or her concerns in the stylistic formula of a scientific essay (cf. Guba & Lincoln, 2009).

In terms of the discursive structure of the academic teacher-student relationship, the types of discourses described above, and their sources and ways of legitimization perform the function of instances of delimitation of discourse, which make possible the expression of certain contents of knowledge and ways of its distribution. In this sense, the “truths” about the reform and academic relationships described in the following parts are the result of the operation of (post)positivist and activist discourses.

The reform “in time” and the issue of changing the academic teacher-student relationship

The discussion on the reform of science and higher education was subordinated to the scheme of temporalization. This means that its basic assumptions, course, and effects were presented by reference to the past and present of the university. Experience expressed on the timeline has been highlighted in the following metaphors: *the university as a temple of knowledge – the university as a diploma factory*.

The *university as a temple of knowledge* refers to the assumptions of the Humboldtian university model. It is the authority of science and the people producing it that attest to its uniqueness.

The university is a community of people, both those who already have various achievements in exploring the secrets of nature, technology, society, or culture, as well as those who are only developing these competences. But this community displays similar moral and social values. It admits only people who meet the criteria set out in both academic tradition and the law. The academic milieu creates a peculiar network of values, meanings, customs, messages, and interpersonal relationships. It creates academic (university) culture. (Górniewicz & Piotrowski, 2014, pp. 136-137)

Their special feature is acting on the basis of an informal and collectively maintained set of principles that make up the phenomenon of the academic community,

partner community, a deep community[s] in which everyone shares a similar feeling of freedom and solidarity. (Andrukowicz, 2011, p. 255)

In the university thus understood, the layout of the relationship occurring between the academic teacher and the student is definitely asymmetrical. Its indisputable foundation is a professor with knowledge and research experience:

the original academic achievements were an essential criterion in its exploration. The courage to think, often uncompromising pursuit of the truth, and the surprising effects of mental work prompted young people to contact such academics. They were treated as individualities, not only in academic, but also in moral terms. Contact with such a researcher was an inspiration for better work, putting more effort in the pursuit of the master’s achievements. Owing to such contacts, the survival of the ethos of the highest-order researcher was possible, the master’s students contributed to the dissemination of important scientific ideas, and he himself guaranteed his students a sense of security and strengthened their courage to undertake the most difficult research tasks. (Kowalik, 2011, p. 91)

The atmosphere of intellectual closeness, mutual trust, and critical following in the footsteps of an academic master is enhanced by his above-average abilities and skills:

An academic teacher, heir of such a great intellectual tradition, has a sense of his unique position in the social structure, a sense of “ruling people’s hearts and minds” among representatives of other professions. He is a moral and social authority for them. It is from the perspective of his actions and political and

ethical choices that other people make their personal decisions on these matters. It is not without reason that before each important political election, the politicians striving to be re-elected meet and have their photographs taken with outstanding scientists, artists, and those people who have achieved success in their professional activities which has been communicated to the public. (Górniewicz & Piotrowski, 2014, p. 131)

Therefore, it is not groundless that he should play the role of a spiritual guide, a personal model for students, “a moral authority in understanding political and social reality, or even an expert [in] the process of empathizing with existential problems experienced by people” (Górniewicz & Piotrowski, 2014, p. 125). His work is a mission defined as “getting to know the complicated mechanisms of the functioning of reality and educating staff prepared to undertake future professional tasks with a high level of creativity” (Górniewicz & Piotrowski, 2014, p. 130).

The death of the “traditional professor” announced in the discourse occurred as a result of the “intrusion of neoliberal ideology with the language of buying, selling, and controlling the product” (Kruszelnicki, 2011, p. 182). For the university as a *temple of knowledge* is being transformed into a corporate educational factory, giving it “a peculiarly understood *homo sacer* status, that is, one of a petrified institution focused on presenting a unified picture of the world, forming citizens with specific features, without too many modification options” (Czerepaniak-Walczak, 2013a, p. 19).

The *university as a diploma factory*, as a metaphorical synthesis of changes affecting universities, is a proof of its coevality:

Currently, a transition period and intensive transformation of the Humboldtian model towards the idea of an entrepreneurial university, establishing a new type of relationship between the university and its external surrounding, are being observed. (Cabańska & Sielicka, 2013, pp. 69-70)

The radical and profound nature of the changes occurring within it results in the transformation of the current status of an academic teacher from “an authority in a given field of science, a master in the education process, and in a sense also a priest of knowledge, an insider[s] in access to sources of knowledge” to “a science worker, a member of a corporation of a scholarly community, who documents his achievements, builds his own knowledge capital and develops the ability to acquire it” (Górniewicz & Piotrowski, 2014, p. 203). The freedom to create, in conjunction with the non-standard formula for building relationships with students, has been limited by the experience of “total control.” For the “production university” imposes on academics

a series of restrictions, seemingly trivial necessities and overt coercion, that is, drafting applications, lists, surveys, reports, the goods excusing your shortening the last class for exhausted students by 20 minutes, confessions about the *benefits* gained from a conference, etc. (Kruszelnicki, 2011, p. 180).

The transformations in the manner of performing the professional role of a professor which they analysed were presented in the characteristics of “third- and fourth-category professors,” “hopeless researchers and teachers.” Brilliant and charismatic individualities fit into the canon thus fulfilling the role of a “docile workhorse” and “teacher prevaricator,” who “will not surprise anyone any more, will not shock, will not lead to an explosion and spiritual transformation in students, but will be a perfect clerk, always punctual, elegantly dressed,

polite, and politically correct instead” (Kruszelnicki, 2011, p. 178). Concern for the maintaining of the ethos of the researcher gives way to “supplying [goods] as part of the *knowledge supermarket*” (Szafran, 2014, p. 256). The model of academic practice is changing:

Researchers not only write books and publish research results, but also create reports that slowly seem to replace knowledge. This changes the formula of knowledge. A report differs from a book in that it must meet the expectations of the contracting authority (i.e., in this sense the researcher is not completely free or cannot always address issues that could be found in independent studies). It is the party contracting the report, from state institutions to corporations, that expects a specific effect, and yet in science it is the cognitive process itself that is a sufficient effect. (Kościelniak & Makowski, 2011, p. 13)

The vision of the *university as a diploma factory* corresponds to the academic description of students. Their characteristics are generalized and derive their sources from the tendency to display individualized impressions about the experienced specificity of teaching work. For the “teacher prevaricator” and the “docile workhorse professor” establishes relationships with a “student *sensu stricto*,” a “student-client,” and a “student-disobedient citizen.”

The student *sensu stricto* model is presented using the figure of a statistical student, who is a reflection of the contemporary condition of the university. A *statistical student*, as a participant in the “xerox studies, xerox students” scheme, “does not study, does not pore over books in the library, does not search for knowledge, but simply copies notes, downloads studies from the Internet, and presents them as his or her paper” (Szymański, 2011, p. 191). The strategy of his or her action results from the massiveness of education and from the unfavourable socio-cultural surroundings, promoting a lifestyle focused on avoiding responsibility for life decisions:

Studies are a challenge that must be met, facing the obstacles of the ubiquitous media that create a world view, affect the perception of reality, and set a hierarchy of values with the dominant feature of “ease,” easiness, freedom, pleasure, and success. (Denek, 2011a, p. 217)

A *student-client* begins studying from a painful collision with academic reality:

I often have the opportunity to observe when, at the beginning of their student careers, their *ethos* of science collides with reality. They quickly discover that not everything is as they had previously imagined. The beauty of scientific research is not as alluring as they used to think. Thus, they face a dilemma: either go through this period of life without engaging in the making of a scientific effort (as did the students of medieval professors), without striving to use this time to improve themselves (as did the students during the Enlightenment and later), or to accept the role of a “little craftsman” who, by mastering the staffage of the research workshop, will perfectly match the social expectations of a scientist. (Kowalik, 2011, p. 90)

His intellectual deficiencies, for example in the field of the critical reading of scientific papers or the effective making of lecture notes, in connection with social and emotional immaturity, condition in *students-clients* a pre-burnout syndrome. It is for this reason that, “instead of striving for perfectionism, a survival strategy spreads among the studying youth”

(Szymański, 2011, p. 194). A special feature of this strategy is the minimization of effort and the maximization of profits derived from the process of studying. Therefore, *students-clients* are looking for knowledge that:

is *temporarily useful*, technical, usable, connected with professional work and provided in accessible, easily digestible packages. They are not looking for the truth either. Instead, like many other users of the extremely popular Wikipedia, they are looking for what is currently believed to be true and is zealously, day by day, updated as a valid version of truth, chasing in this way and trying to intercept objects that are famous for moving faster than even the most ambitious pursuit groups. (Korpaczewska & Murawska, 2011, p. 281)

Therefore, the purpose of their studies is only to obtain a diploma: “What knowledge and skills they acquire is not of particular interest to them. The only thing that counts is for how much and with what effort you can get a diploma” (Kiebała, 2012, p. 190).

In turn, *students-disobedient citizens* are convinced that higher education is a world of semblance:

professors pretend to be embracing research, students pretend to be reading their studies, and professors assess them well in return. (Szymański, 2011, p. 187 after Bachmann, 2009)

The awareness of the changes affecting modern universities along with the knowledge of the socio-cultural and political context concentrates students’ attention on such issues as: "excessive simplification of study programmes, worse quality of education, overcrowded lecture rooms” (Kościelniak, 2011, p. 111), or the need to pay for the second course of study. Their disobedience

is not necessarily manifested in a revolutionary effort or hatred of the state, but in a publicly expressed opposition to the form of government, the political system at the university, to the practices in public life, and finally to broad regional and global changes. (Kościelniak, 2011, p. 120)

Student activism is part of the university’s critical mission, its activity in favour of pro-democratic attitudes such as the polyphony and freedom of expressing opinions, freedom of association, and the public manifestation of views. (Kościelniak, 2011, p. 123)

Students-disobedient citizens are, therefore, hand in hand with professors apprehensive about the future of the university because:

they more often want to experience for themselves the world as it is, that is, internally conflicted and painfully contradictory, and not to look with the eyes of others, who are often effectively dressed in the fashionable robes of pluralists, post-modernists, or environmentalists; they rather want to look where others have not looked, to the same extent (paradoxically) they want to be guided by both history and theory, historiosophy and personalism, unity and difference, they want to learn the whole constellation of truth, the image of which is a hybrid or connections of its various *cluster* type sides rather than a rigid indication of the centre and periphery. (Andrukowicz, 2011, p. 232)

Thus, the joint participation in the process of negotiating the current importance of the university becomes the basis for the forming of a new type of academic community for which the university becomes a “bastion of protest and defiance” (Kościelniak, 2011, p. 132):

Opposition to various matters, both political and intra-university, indicates the public nature of the mission of the university, which, through the conscious citizenship of its students, creates a mechanism of opposition and generates the “numerosity of the power of opinions. (Kościelniak, 2011, p. 122)

The reform in space and student ennoblement

The characteristics of the reform as changes in space are located in the network of relationships between the local and international higher education sector. The pattern of a western university remains a constant reference criterion. While in the case of research activity, the reform is associated with the (too low) position of Polish universities in world rankings, in the field of educational activity a special role is played by the Bologna Process, which sets out directives for the establishment of the European Higher Education Area. Together with the signing of the Bologna Declaration by the Polish government in 1999, the expectations of new university stakeholders (i.e., employers, representatives of local communities and, above all, students) are becoming the reference point for the organization of research and teaching processes. The directives of the Bologna Declaration, which consider the status of students in three aspects, have contributed to their special ennoblement:

The first aspect presents the student as a client. In the new dimension of higher education, which has become a service, a student is a person expecting from their university, among other things, a high level and quality of education and the possibility of travelling abroad. The second aspect says that the student is an indispensable link in academic governance and should be treated as a partner who actively participates in the decision-making process. [...] The third aspect concerns the issue that emphasizes the fact that the student is treated as an object; the effects of changes resulting from the Bologna process are directly felt by students, in particular when it comes to changes in the study programme, opportunities for international student exchange, etc. (Cyran, 2012, p. 99)

In the analysed discourse, the role of students was reduced only to its first (student-client) and third (student as an object of change) aspect. The category of partnership, subordinated to the logic of the “strategic structured partnership” was presented in the context of a sophisticated game of interest played in the science and higher education sector:

every educational institution must separate today who is its competitor and who is its potential partner. (Kwiek, 2011, p. 64)

universities should make strategic choices and implement internal reforms to expand their sources of funding, increase areas where excellence is achieved, and create their competitive position. (Stachowiak-Kudła, 2012 p. 82)

Therefore, with its scope it does not cover relationships occurring between the academic teacher and his or her student. *Students-clients*, however, are especially a “tasty morsel” in the race to survive in a highly competitive market, because “contemporary rivalry in the world is about minds, creating development opportunities for the most talented citizens and attracting

talent from abroad” (Denek, 2011a, p. 143). It is on their number that the amount of the subsidy granted to the institution by the state, and even the prestige of the university measured, among others, by the number of foreign students, depends. Therefore, universities undertake diverse marketing strategies to encourage high school graduates to study:

One of them, observed in particular in the humanities and social sciences, is to enrich the offer with specializations with graceful-sounding names related, among others, to economics, marketing, IT and, thus, to areas that are considered to be future-oriented and affecting the development of the economy. The university, along with the creators of and participants in higher education, as it is impossible not to notice, presents an attitude of increasing openness to changes and readiness to introduce reforms at various levels of academic education. A confirmation of this orientation of university representatives on change is, *inter alia*, the implementation of subjects such as management, marketing, or entrepreneurship into curricula. (Zakowicz, 2013, p. 143)

Students-clients are, therefore, a particularly rewarding object of university interaction. Being its basic object, at the same time they are deprived of the right to influence its form and direction.

The reform as hope and the conditions of the academic teacher-student relationship

The reform as hope to improve the quality of the science and higher education system in Poland results from the conviction of its terrible condition:

If Polish higher education does not want to fall behind the world’s leading and even global universities, it must undergo development and evolve. (Nowacki, 2013, p. 36)

The low position of Polish universities on a global scale prompts us to consider the validity of the adopted model of their functioning. (Nowacki, 2013, p. 25)

Therefore, academics undertake meticulous analyses aimed at identifying such areas of academic functioning as would require immediate repair. The idea of the reform is, therefore, positively valued, and even equated with the possibility of solving the diagnosed difficulties and problems. Among them, problems with the practical implementation of the internationalization process (global aspect), as well as the underfunding of the Polish science and higher education sector, its massification, and marketization (local aspect) are manifested particularly severely (Siwińska, 2014; Wolszczak-Derłacz, 2013). “The pauperization of the university and the depreciation of the humanities” (Kobylarek, 2013, p. 120) derive their sources from the neoliberal practice of reforming it. The multi-jobbing of researchers perceived by the participants in the discourse results from the insufficient financing of their work:

[Many] of them have also joined the pursuit of profit, undertaking multi-job work often out of necessity, because research work is still rewarded inadequately in relation to the time devoted to it, the effort incurred, and the research achievements obtained. (Kowalik, 2011, p. 92)

Functioning at several universities at the same time, in turn, causes the phenomenon of over-burdening scholars with teaching and organizational obligations. This state of affairs is not conducive to exercising care over high quality education and academic development:

From my studies in the 1970s, I remember perfectly well that the weakest lecturer was a professor with only two full-time jobs, who was the director of an institute at one university and the vice-chancellor at another, even a neighbouring one. Who would refuse him permission to function in this way since he belonged to the establishment? And so he only had time to prepare for his lectures once in a while and such preparation came down to rewriting them from his notes in which he sometimes got lost himself. Some still read out their old textbooks. Therefore, the second job was in itself a deadly dose of duties, which shattered the quality of functioning in view of the scale of responsibilities, just like performing the honourable functions elevating to the rank of inviolable. (Witkowski, 2011, p. 108)

Professors and top tutors have too many teaching responsibilities at their home university, and with still low salaries they are easily tempted to take up additional work at another, usually private university. However, such extensive duties make it difficult to conduct one's own intensive studies and research. (Szymański, 2011, p. 198)

In addition to the massiveness and marketization of academic education, academic staff, lacking motivation for both teaching and conducting research, are also an issue exposed in the discourse. The atmosphere of its intellectual stagnation is intensified by comparing the scholarly community to a "string of workers." It is they,

with ashen, expressionless faces, that pass through the door of their workplace, first stopping for a moment to pass their ID card over a special reader, and then standing for 10 hours at the assembly line, while the supervisors follow their every move. (Kruszelnicki, 2011, p. 179).

Therefore, an increase in the financial outlays on the discussed sector is the pillar of the reform designed by academics. The actions of politicians, assessed as harmful and even endangering the quality of higher education in Poland, are classified as ineffective and undesirable:

As a weapon of the reform, the new Law on Higher Education may provide an opportunity for real improvement in higher education; however; owing to a number of shortcomings of a substantive and a formal nature, these opportunities are smaller and, by some representatives of the milieu, assessed as non-existent. Thus, an imperfect, and even evaluated as bad, act does not necessarily have to bring the results expected as a result of the reform. (Dziedziczak-Foltyn, 2013, p. 97)

In this context, in the discourse presenting Barbara Kudrycka's reform as an opportunity to improve the condition of science and higher education, the motive of the need and necessity of an academic debate about the condition of Polish academia as well as the directions and tools of its change returns.

Summary and discussion

The principle of the positive valuation of academic tradition while challenging its modern times, noticeable in the discussed discourse, is, according to Marek Kwiek (2017), the intellectual matrix of constructing knowledge about the science and higher education sector in Poland. The statements constituting it become strengthened or weakened depending on the socio-historical moment of their occurrence. The time of intensively reforming universities is, therefore, conducive to intensifying critical voices. What is unknown causes both fear and a longing for well-known patterns of conduct (Sułkowski, 2016). Forced adaptation to changes imposed from above causes a reaction of resistance and an escalation of tension discernible in the discourse. Thus, capturing it opens up spaces for a slightly different interpretation of the obtained research effects. For on their basis, it is difficult to unequivocally determine whether the introduced reform has become a direct cause of the changes experienced by representatives of academia, or whether the incompatibility of the Humboldtian university model with the extremely unstable requirements of modern times has caused the phenomenon of “university crisis,” and thus its reformation.

The interest in the discursive constructions of academic teachers and students results from our belief that their status is extremely susceptible to change. Students have a special place in the structure of higher education, because their position is always blurred and unclear and, therefore, also vulnerable to reinterpretation. Students can be seen as a border group, once forming part of the academic community and university, and, at other times, as a clientele using educational services (Stankiewicz & Ostrowicka, 2020). Already as part of a traditional university dating back to the Middle Ages, the regulation of the interaction of students, teachers, and their protectors in the form of the church or the state was a source of political disputes (Pedersen, 1997). In our research, we have become interested in contemporary discussions of academics on educational relationships and roles, which are subject to consolidation or change as the university transforms in the neoliberal direction. The models of academic staff and students emerging from them arise at the meeting of generalized considerations on the reform of science and higher education in Poland and the transformation of the Humboldtian university into an entrepreneurial model (Burawski, 2013; Clark, 1998; Enders, 2001; Kwiek, 2011a). The knowledge constituting them is complex, and the direction of explanations occurring as its part covers at least several aspects of the sector in question. Globally stimulated educational and scientific policy reforms modify working conditions at local universities. Their nature, radically different from the previous one, forces the representatives of academia to engage in new ways of academic behaviour, indifferent to the quality of educational relationships. In the discussed discourse, the *model of a traditional, charismatic professor* is an element of academic tradition. The set of features and properties that make it up is positively valued among academics, and even identified with the high quality of academic education and the university’s elite status. Its practical implementation, however, is prevented by the installation of a new university model. The entrepreneurial university, referred to in the discussed discourse as the “diploma factory,” is subordinated to the principles of transparency, accountability, and measurability of work results in academia (Sułkowski, 2016). Profit orientation and, thus, the ability to maintain a high position in the highly competitive market of educational services, modifies the relationships established so far in the academic community. Traditional professors play the role of *docile workhorses* who respect corporate work principles in the field of research and teaching. Restricting their autonomy, in connection with the underfunding and massification of the science and higher education sector, results in the appearance of *hopeless academic teachers and researchers* who fake the effects of professional activity. The instrumental and uninvolved approach to work, however, fits in with the contemporarily generated expectations of university stakeholders. Both students and

representatives of the university's socio-cultural milieu direct its activities to meet the needs of the modern labour market. Therefore, orientation towards the education of "good employees" limits the need for broad-profile education in favour of the transfer of narrowly specialized and practically useful knowledge. Therefore, *students-clients* are guided by the motto that "it is better to know everything about something than something about everything" (Melosik, 2000, pp. 204-205). The university as a "temple of knowledge" has evolved into the "educational factory" model, distributing academic diplomas to all representatives of the educational game.

Our empirical analysis of the discourse included the debate which preceded the current reform, introduced by Jarosław Gowin, which had assumed much more radical structural and systemic changes than the reform of 2011. In terms of educational policy, which has the strongest impact on the relations between students and professors that interest us here, we can expect progressive stratification of the system and consolidation of qualitative differences between research-oriented and student-oriented universities (academies or colleges). In the current political debate on the direction of development of Polish higher education, the key concept and objective has become scientific excellence, while the educational and formative functions of the university are at the periphery of interest of decision-makers. Moreover, the so-called Act 2.0 of Minister Gowin on the one hand significantly increased the scope of power held solely by university presidents (rectors), and on the other, introduced new forms of participation of external stakeholders (representatives of the university's social and economic environment) in the management of the university. We may assume that these changes will have an impact on the development of expectations and ideas concerning academic relations, standards of "valuable" education, a "good" student, and a "true" master.

One thing is for sure. Knowledge about the science and higher education sector and the relationships that occur within it is an extremely rich mosaic of diverse senses and meanings. Its reconstruction conditions the possibility of conducting critical reflection on the complex and variable interactions of the university with the state, the market, and with other influential actors of socio-political life.

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