

# Problemy edukacji dorosłych w Polsce i na świecie

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## **Non-standard higher education recipients as an important area of the university's third mission. Examples of good practices of Polish and German universities**

Niestandardowi odbiorcy szkolnictwa wyższego  
jako ważny obszar trzeciej misji uczelni. Przykłady  
dobrych praktyk uczelni polskich i niemieckich

**Key words:** third mission of universities, transit, good practices, activation.

**Abstract.** The article concerns the third mission activities implemented by universities, which activate local community and act on its behalf. The main goal of the article is to present current trends and scope of the third mission of universities through a critical analysis of domestic and foreign literature and presentation of relevant good practices. To this end, the concept of the third mission was discussed, i.e. various activities of universities dedicated to specific groups. The accompanying goal of the article is to answer the question about the importance of the third mission in management strategies of universities in Poland in relation to the traditional tasks of universities - education and research. Universities undertake initiatives for the benefit of the local community by involving various groups of recipients, including groups at risk of social exclusion. This is an important initiative from the social point of view because it changes the university into a place accessible to all interested, a building in which both a preschooler and an elderly person can feel good and develop. The third mission not only affects students and its employees, but also shapes the knowledge society, builds social capital, reaches economic and cultural benefits, and it allows the diffusion of knowledge.

**Słowa kluczowe:** trzecia misja uniwersytetów, tranzyt, dobre praktyki, aktywizacja.

**Streszczenie.** Artykuł dotyczy wdrażania przez uczelnie działań z zakresu trzeciej misji szkół wyższych, które obok działalności dydaktycznej, badawczej coraz częściej aktywizują lokalną społeczność i współpracują na jej rzecz. Zasadniczym celem artykułu jest przedstawienie obecnego kierunku rozwoju i zakresu trzeciej misji uczelni poprzez krytyczną analizę literatury krajowej i zagranicznej oraz prezentację dobrych praktyk z tego zakresu. W tym celu podjęto problem koncepcji tzw. trzeciej misji, a więc różnorodnych działań szkół wyższych dedykowanych określonym grupom. Celem towarzyszącym jest także chęć udzielenia odpowiedzi na pytanie o znaczenie trzeciej misji w strategiach zarządczych szkół wyższych w Polsce w odniesieniu do tradycyjnie wyodrębnionych misji akademickich – kształcenia oraz prowadzenia badań naukowych. Uczelnie wyższe mogą i coraz częściej działają na rzecz społeczności lokalnej poprzez rozszerzanie swojej oferty dla różnych grup odbiorców, w tym dla grup zagrożonych wykluczeniem społecznym. Jest to ważna inicjatywa z punktu widzenia społecznego, ponieważ pokazuje uczelnię jako miejsce dostępne dla wszystkich zainteresowanych, budynek, w którym przedszkolak i osoba starsza mogą czuć się dobrze i rozwijać. Działalność uczelni wpływa nie tylko na studentów i pracowników, ale kształtuje również społeczeństwo wiedzy. Możliwość dzielenia się swoim dorobkiem oraz inicjatywy na rzecz różnych grup społecznych pozwalają na budowanie kapitału społecznego, korzyści ekonomicznych i kulturowych, umożliwiając dyfuzję wiedzy.

**Introduction.** Regardless of the kind of services which are proposed by them, or of the branch of economy which is represented by them, organizations and enterprises conduct their activities upon the basis of a strategy, and of a broadly-understood mission. It is no different, either, in the case of tertiary education institutions, which define their mission “being aware of the historical, economical, and also cultural, importance” (JDU, 2019) of the mission which is fulfilled by an institution as important as university. Throughout the centuries, they have been fulfilling two constitutive missions. The first of them has been to conduct scientific research, in particular, concentrating upon specialised pansophy (Gerth, 1992, p.116), whereas the other one has been constituted by the general scope of education. These two tasks change depending upon the expectations of society, legal determinants, or also international tendencies. Regardless, however, of external determinants, or mechanisms observed at universities themselves, the tertiary educational system is an important pillar of each and every community, and of each and every developing country. More and more frequently, universities extend their offer, both in the aspect of the directions of education, and, as well, in that of the different forms of support programmes for individuals not being the principal recipients of their services, and the missions fulfilled by universities take under consideration the needs of different groups. This is an initiative important from the point of view of society, and it presents a tertiary education institution as a place accessible to all those who are interested, as a building in which the attendee of nursery school and an elderly individual may feel good and develop. Taking under consideration as well the fact it is objectively indispensable for tertiary education institutions to collaborate with the representatives of employers, the commercialisation of scientific research, and also the intensification of this collaboration, the third mission of tertiary education institutions is becoming a significant pillar of the tertiary educational system.

This article is relevant to the implementation by tertiary education institutions their activities within the scope of the third mission of tertiary education institutions, which, apart from conducting their didactic and research activity, more and more frequently have a social role to be fulfilled. The essential objective is to present the contemporary direction of the development, and the scope, of the third mission of tertiary education institutions by means of the critical analysis of the domestic and foreign literature, and also of the presentation of good practices within this scope. In order to accomplish this objective, it was attempted to discuss the issue of the conception of the so-called third mission, and that means different activities of tertiary education institutions dedicated to particular groups.

**The tertiary education institutions of the third generation – in the direction of the new mission.** If contrasted with other organisations, universities can be distinguished not only because of tradition, but, as well, because of mission and fundamental values. The reason for that fact is that it difficult to conclusively and in a way leaving no space for controversies compare the mission of an enterprise with the mission of a tertiary education institution, which is much broader and based upon ideals, rather than upon determined strategic objectives. Tertiary education institutions formulating their missions refer, first and foremost, to identity, shaped by certain traditions, customs and/or cultural models. Not only does this mission render it easier to distinguish one university against other universities, but, as well, it facilitates uniting academic milieu under the banner of common objectives and the values of paramount importance.

The first mission of tertiary education institutions consists in conducting scientific research, which does not necessarily have to find practical applications, but, nevertheless, which is a step on the road to true knowledge, to the investigation of the crux of the matters. Understanding the reality which surrounds us is not possible without an appropriate store of knowledge, and this reality evolves all the time; therefore, knowledge has to provide appropriate tools for finding one's feet in this very reality. "Because of its character, because of the fact that it needs to be taken care of to survive, knowledge requires constant perfecting and modernisation. The process of learning generates knowledge which serves, among others, the objective of eliminating uncertainties. That is the reason for the fact that both knowledge and learning constitute the principal, even though not the only existing, strategic resources the acquisition of which by entities is indispensable" (Bednarczyk *et al.*, 2005, p.200), and, among the principal distributors of knowledge, there are tertiary education institutions. Search for knowledge itself, conducting scientific research at a high level, is what makes a person or an institution deserving being called 'academic', not less, however, than the opportunity of transforming it into particular solutions for economy or society is a *sui generis* new challenge for universities. Knowledge, as the crucial element of the market, of its competitive character, may not remain confined to the lecture halls of universities. Establishing collaboration in the field of research, conducting activities in the field of

implementation, establishing clusters<sup>1</sup>, and the commercialisation of research, are the typical areas of the exchange of knowledge between a tertiary education institution and an enterprise, and the particular branches of economy. Restricting, however, the influence exerted by university to the collaboration of this kind does not provide the opportunity of using the complete potential of academic community, both in the aspect of personnel and students alike.

Within the frameworks of the second mission, tertiary education institutions fulfill tasks connected with education, both taking under consideration the offer the target of which are individuals wishing to acquire tertiary education, and the attendees raising their qualifications by means of participation in courses, post-graduate studies, or the different forms of broadening knowledge and abilities. Apart from abilities and competences, knowledge is a significant constituent not only of the functioning of an individual in their occupation, but, as well, of the participation of this very individual in the remaining spheres of life. Lifelong education, colloquially referred to as 'brushing up', is becoming particularly important in knowledge society, in a knowledge-based economy. Demand on employees with high qualifications, with a particular level of knowledge, but, first and foremost, for employees willing to increase their qualifications, mobile in the context of particular sectors of economy, and flexible in their reactions to transformations, is constantly raising. The labour market, apart from a document confirming formal qualifications, requires a creative attitude to problems, solutions developed by thinking outside the box, and creative mindset. Knowledge acquired in the course of education has to be broadened, confronted with new developments and new needs, and updated all the time, and all those activities may not be necessarily restricted to merely a single field. Education at a tertiary level is becoming more and more available, also for individuals who are not particularly mobile, or who are up to their ears at work. "Once, when technological progress was much, much slower, a human being might have, throughout the entire period of their occupational activity, survived without it becoming indispensable to adjust oneself to new technologies, and might well have felt that full occupational qualifications had been acquired by them" (Sztumski, 2007, p. 36), whereas nowadays qualifications once acquired may be of no use, or require profound updating, in a few months. The brushing up referred to hereinabove, the development of the competences and qualifications already acquired, is a response to global trends,

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<sup>1</sup> Clusters are usually composed of 80-100 entities. They include three types of institutions: enterprises (70–80% of which are small and medium-sized companies), business environment (training centres, center of the transfer o technology, technological parks and business incubators) and scientific units (academic tertiary education institutions and research institutes). Clusters are one of the most important tools of the policy of regional development and the innovation policy of the UE. They include companies and organisations working near each other (among others, producers, suppliers, recipients and distributors), which, even though they compete with one another on the market, simultaneously wish to exchange experiences, and also to collaborate for the benefit of the common objective and benefits. These may include, for instance, developing, in collaboration with scientists, new technological solutions (website [http://naukawpolsce.pap.pl/sites/default/files/201807/RAPORT\\_science\\_Zastosowane.pdf](http://naukawpolsce.pap.pl/sites/default/files/201807/RAPORT_science_Zastosowane.pdf), accessed on 12.08.2019.

involving constant learning, in the formal or informal setting, whilst excluding a passive attitude and confining oneself to looking for a job as a human being needs to create their own workplace. As it is emphasised by Adam Solak, "(...) it is easier to follow the path already paved, even though frequently adjusting it to reality which is changing so rapidly may involve plenty of effort for the part of a human being and for the part of economy" (Solak, 2016, p.90), therefore, acquiring knowledge which will not only help one to find one's feet in the global village, but, first and foremost, to create it for one's own needs and for the needs of milieu, is recommendable. Such an opportunity is provided by the offer of tertiary education institutions, which is frequently emphasised in the contents of their mission. Broadening educational offer consists not only in becoming open to the needs of society and of the market. Universities shape conscious citizens, able to think independently, at different ages and coming from different milieus, and, *ipso facto*, exerting its influence upon the future of the country.

As it has been emphasised hereinabove, the principal mission of each and every tertiary education institution, since as early as the time of establishing the first university (in Italy), has been to deepen knowledge, and also to accumulate it. Scientific and didactic activity made universities peculiar learning organisations, and that means organisations possessing an extremely significant position in society, and in the hierarchy of it. They have become the source of knowledge, which they share with the external environment, and, *ipso facto*, they determine in a way the processes taking place in society. The target of the mission of tertiary education institutions is, first and foremost, the external environment, not only because of fulfilling an important marketing function by means of indicating the scope of their activity, of *sui generis* presenting an offer for potential customers. This fact of presenting tertiary education institutions as institutions conducting their activity with the benefit of community, for the benefit of each and every citizen, not necessarily a student or an attendee, in mind. In the recent years, we have been witnessing changes, both in the perception of the two traditional missions of tertiary education institutions and in the position of tertiary education institutions itself in the structure of society as well. The third mission of tertiary education institutions, referred to, as well, as a social mission, consists in shaping relations with social surrounding, not only by means of partnership or the exchange of knowledge. This mission involves initiatives within the scope of culture, ethics and becoming open to the new recipients of the offer of tertiary education. The reason for that fact is that, more and more frequently, the target of the offer of universities is constituted by non-standards recipients, and, therefore, universities become involved in social and occupational support programmes for different groups.

Contemporary tertiary education institutions cannot function efficiently in separation from external entities, and this applies to enterprises and corporations as well. More and more emphasis is being placed on the commercialisation of scientific research and its usefulness in economy. The transfer of technologies, education which is to fulfill the needs of the labour market, or emphasis upon developing entrepreneurial attitudes in students, are the constituents of the vision of university enriched by

adding the third mission to the scope of its activities. Restricting the third mission of tertiary education institutions to conducting activities concentrated upon developing a competitive advantage in economy upon the basis of the transfer of knowledge from university to the external environment fails to include a number of initiatives and particular activities undertaken by these organisations with the benefit of society, culture, education and individuals in the danger of exclusion, in mind. More and more willingly, tertiary education institutions are implementing activities which reach far beyond the traditionally-understood third mission. Not only is the popularisation of them recommendable from the point of view of developing a favourable image of tertiary education, but also it contributes to the increased involvement of community in the initiatives of universities as well.

It has already been for several years, that the universities of the third age and children's universities have been enjoying well-established positions in the structure of the majority of Polish and foreign tertiary education institutions. They attract to universities both individuals wishing to acquire new knowledge and abilities as well as to establish new social contacts. Simultaneously, they fulfill an important social function; they reduce the distance between tertiary education institutions and people not necessarily participating in the activities of the tertiary educational system on a daily basis. Nevertheless, these initiatives, extremely important as they are, do not yet constitute the entire scope of implementing the presumptions of the third mission of tertiary education institutions in the social aspect. Numerous groups, in particular the defavourised ones, those facing the danger of exclusion, groups connected with disease prevention and medical care may and want to take advantage of the resources of tertiary education institutions. The third mission of tertiary education institutions, even though this term is not free of being ambiguous: in reality refers to a great degree of openness. It refers to a dialogue, to a productive and new development of the networks of contacts between university, a city/town and a region, but, as well, to improvement in the potential of innovation in society facing great challenges to mankind connected with new partnerships. The absence of the complete conceptualisation of the notion of the third mission of tertiary education institutions renders it possible to implement activities in this area by each and every tertiary education institution, and to adjust these activities to its own strategy of activity.

**The implementation of the third mission of tertiary education institutions – reports on good practices.** Restricting the third mission of an academic tertiary education institution to conducting activities concentrated upon developing economical superiority upon the basis of the transfer of knowledge from academic tertiary education institutions to an external milieu fails to take under consideration a number of initiatives and particular activities undertaken by these organisations for the benefit of societies, culture, education and individuals in the danger of exclusion. More and more willingly, academic tertiary education institutions implement activities which reach far beyond the scope of the traditionally-understood third mission. Their popularisation is not only

recommended in the perspective of developing a positive image of tertiary education, but it also contributes to a greater involvement of community in the initiatives of academic tertiary education institutions.

Serving the third mission of academic tertiary education institutions requires a conception, workload, and, of course, financial resources. However, the instances of numerous Polish academic centres in the recent years demonstrate that the authorities of academic tertiary education institutions and scientific personnel have original ideas for the implementation of activities within the area of the third mission. In particular, it is recommendable to pay attention to projects which support individuals being the members of so-called risk groups. Improvement in their situation, social and occupational activation, demonstrate what a big role is that played by academic tertiary education institutions in fulfilling the needs of a local community. One of the instances is the implementation, at Jan Długosz University in Częstochowa, of the project “Transition into Adulthood with the Competences of the Future”, co-financed from the means of the National Center for Research and Development.

The general objective of this project is to raise competences (crucial for the economy and development of the country) in the case of 60 individuals at the age 14–18 years from care and education institutions situated on the area of the city of Częstochowa, and also of the county of Częstochowa. Providing support for the above-indicated group results from, first and foremost, their more difficult (in comparison with that of their peers) situation, and also from the specific traits, frequently meaning that this group is in the danger of social exclusion. The lack of emotional support of the family is the most severe problem for this group. Very frequently, it results in various kinds of emotional disorders, reaching for drugs as early as at a very young age, and adopting a passive attitude to life, consisting, in principle, in the lack of self-confidence and trust in their own abilities. This project will contribute to making those under the care of orphanages independent by means of occupational activation, education, development and improving the chances of finding a job.

Under the project, the following tasks are the conducted:

- the certified courses of a foreign language;
- workshop classes with career advisors and educational brokers within the scope of occupational activation;
- planning the path of further education;
- training within the scope of entrepreneurship and interpersonal communication preparing to functioning in social and occupational groups;
- visits and study trips providing the opportunity of making oneself acquainted with the educational offer of a region, including academic tertiary education institutions and prospective jobs.

The fact that all the classes for the participants in the project are conducted by the scientific and didactic personnel of Jan Długosz University in Czestochowa, and on the premises of this academic tertiary education institution, is significant in the perspective of serving the third mission of an academic tertiary education institution. Not only do

the those under their care have a chance of making themselves better acquainted with the infrastructure of an academic tertiary education institution, but, first and foremost, they can see tertiary education as a stage in education open to everyone regardless of their financial situation. The lecturers conducting the classes, the teachers of foreign languages, apart from following the curriculum, make attempts to involve those under their care in the everyday activity of this academic tertiary education institution. Those under their care participate in cultural events organised by its students, and are guests at lectures and sporting events.

The idea of the third mission of a tertiary education institution is implemented in academic centres all over the world. Nevertheless, however, amongst the countries of Europe it is German tertiary education institutions that deserve particular recognition in the analysed area of their activity.

One of the universities most involved in implementing the third mission is Goethe University in Frankfurt. The employees of this tertiary education institution are involved in undertakings together with external partners, both employers and local authorities, the target group of which is society. Frequently, they are involved in social, technological and political issues in order to provide solutions within the scope of the different kinds of collaborative solutions. A tertiary education institution defines programmes that are to bring benefits to independence and freedoms, and also undertakes initiative relevant to these important issues. What is significant from the point of view of the sustainability of results is that the proprietary financial means of this university are generated to cover the costs of their activities within the scope of the third mission.

After performing the analysis of the projects the implementation of which is undertaken by Goethe University, paying attention to the initiative which are to bring benefits to women coming from different countries, both from the academic milieu and the economic one, is recommendable. *Frauen mit Format* is an undertaking helping women to follow their individual paths of occupational career, and, first and foremost, placing emphasis upon differences in the access of women to education and to work in different countries, and making attempts to eliminate them. On the area of the campus, a informal platform was developed; thanks to which, women are able to exchange ideas and provide one another with mutual help.

Mutual support instead of competition is the most important idea adhered to by individuals responsible for the project. The following tasks are conducted, and all of them are situated within the scope of the third mission:

- conducting occupational and personal development trainings events for interested women in the on-line format,
- the intensive exchange of experiences and good practices between participants;
- helping women who move to Frankfurt and commence occupational career;
- fight for the equality of women in the world of science and business.

Not only does such a form of conducting the third mission eliminate inequalities, but it also means that university promotes conducting entrepreneurial activity the



objective of which is to achieve double return, namely such which is interested not only in economic gains, but, as well, wants to contribute to solving social or environmental problems in the case of women.

Access to education at a tertiary level for certain individuals is still rendered more difficult. University in Bremen noticed these issues, and initiated activity the target of which are students coming from the milieus of immigrants. It provides intensive consulting services and orientation before education at a tertiary level is commenced so as to make students assess their own occupational predispositions, and make an appropriate decision concerning the continuation of education. Simultaneously, the university motivates the development of own talents by means of developing the offer within the following scope:

- consulting services and providing educational information about the requirements in the aspect of curricula and qualifications on particular majors;
- offer of one-to-one and group classes for students experiencing difficulties in using the English language;
- flexible offer of courses and teaching in the appropriately-designed modules and part-time;
- special offer for students with a high level of motivation,

Involving individuals coming from the milieus of immigrants in the educational system at a tertiary level is not only a noble initiative. It is, first and foremost, a means of the prevention of poverty and social inequalities, as well as of providing qualified employees for the German economy.

**Final remarks.** For academic tertiary education institutions, serving the third mission is not only a challenge, but it is also an opportunity to use the possessed resources of knowledge in practical activity, in activity directed to assistance and support. This develops the new kind of an academic tertiary education institution based upon alterocentrism. As it is emphasised by J. Kumaczewski (2013, p.65), “an academic tertiary education institution cannot resign from traditional values: academic, formative education, preparing the graduate also to honour and live by universal values, ethics in their actions, objectives ‘of higher order’, upon which the future of civilisation needs to be built”. Appropriately implemented, not only is the third mission not in contradiction to the above-mentioned ideals, but it rather provides the opportunity to transfer them to the different groups of local communities.

The current process of the implementation of the third mission in academic tertiary education institutions is a challenge requiring the involvement of both the academic milieu and the external environment. This consists in a change in the ways of thinking about an academic tertiary education institution as a closed institution, which confines itself, principally, to conducting research and educating. It means the perception of an academic tertiary education institution as an organisation having a substantial potential in terms of personnel, methodology and research facilities, which can be implemented in solving local problems.

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