MODERNIZATION OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN POLAND. THE PERSPECTIVE OF REFLEXIVE MODERNIZATION

Summary

The article critically examines the modernization of the Higher Education (HE) sector from the perspective of reflexive modernization. The source of radical change of HE in Poland was the neoliberal institutional solution, opening HE institutions to privatization, competition and marketization and liberating them from the heteronomous bureaucratic structure legitimized by the conditions of the previous system. To explain the nature of the changes in Higher Education, three analytical categories of reflexive modernization are used as heuristic tools: individualization, risk and reflexivity.

Keywords: reflexive modernization, individualization, social risk, Higher Education

INTRODUCTION

Past and future modernizations in the Higher Education (HE) sector are marked by three neoliberal institutional solutions. The first of these relates to the neoliberal economic reforms which started twenty years ago and the fundamental goal of which was a significant restriction of the role of the state in economy as well as in other areas of social life. As far as the HE sector is concerned, the role of the state can be limited on the basis of the amendment of the 1990 Higher Education Act of September 12th [Journal of Laws No 65. Item 385, amended]. The Act enabled free and independent development of HE through restoring the decision-making power to the rectors and senate of the University. The previous
strategy wherein the HE was to be fully financed by the public was discontinued, while the new policy entailed broad autonomy for public universities and favorable conditions for founding non-public ones, which in consequence resulted in marketization and commodification of teaching processes and research [cf. Pachociński 2004]. New institutional solutions have transformed the previous bureaucratic HE system into the educational services market [Simonova, Antonowicz 2006].

Another institutional solution has been the Bologna Process, adopted by the European Union Member States in 1999. The Member States established the general principles of the education organization, the so-called European Higher Education Area, the purpose of which was to engender fundamental transformations within the educational systems of the higher education in all the European Union countries. In practical terms, it meant the opening of the higher education sector to competition, privatization and marketization. This, in turn, was intended to create conditions for citizens’ mobility, adapt the educational system to the needs of the labor market, improve the employability of qualified workers and improve the competitive position of the European HE system in relation to the rest of the world, especially to the USA [Kraśniewski 2006]. In Poland, the objectives of the Bologna Declaration have been included in the 2005 Act of July 27th, the Law on Higher Education [Journal of Laws 2005 No 164, Item 135, amended]. Thus, learning in a higher education institution within the Bologna Process has been given a new dimension dominated by neoliberal practices, forcibly executing the adaptation to the requirements of the information society and knowledge-based economy [cf. Szeląg 2006].

The implementation of the Bologna Process guidelines has become more effective since Poland joined the European structures in 2004. The main objective in this strategy was that until 2010 and within a significant region of Europe the most competitive and dynamic economy be created, knowledge-based, capable of constant development, providing more jobs and more socially coherent. The leaders of the European Union stated in Lisbon that “investing in people and creating an active and dynamic state of wealth” is the basis of the knowledge-based economy. Member States must therefore strive to allocate more financial means on human resources and to raise the importance of life-long learning. Poland’s access to the EU has considerably marked the direction of future governmental actions within the scope of the creation of the development strategy for the research and higher education sector. Such a development strategy until 2015 has been presented by the government in a 2008 document of April 8th, in which it has been stated that the research and development activity is of crucial importance
to Poland’s civilization development and to the increase in the innovation and competitiveness of the Polish economy.

The document has accepted that the institutional solutions described above provide considerable modernization sources for the higher education. A similar point of view can be found in a research report carried out within the framework of the international NESOR project (2006-2008), which states as follows: “The EU Lisbon strategy, with its focus on competitiveness and employability and the Bologna process, with its plan of the transnational transparency of the European higher education, have been the main sources of influence on the transformation of the higher education in Europe. The global challenges, the economic development and the changing societal expectations have also affected the function of the higher education institutions. As a consequence, a new social risk has emerged, one which is a source of concern of students and graduates as well as the employees of the higher education sector.” [NESOR 2009:298]. These consequences require defining and introduction within the academic discourse, which would allow for a more profound reflection upon them. The purpose of this paper is a critical examination from the perspective of the reflexive modernization theory of how the process of modernization of the higher education contributes to the revealing of incongruities between the strive for modernity (of the civic society and the market economy) and the overcoming of the old structures of post-socialist society. With this purpose in mind, three following analytical categories of reflexive modernization shall be employed, namely: individualization, risk and reflexivity, as heuristic instruments for explaining the character of transformations within the higher education system.

KEY GUIDELINES OF THE REFLEXIVE MODERNIZATION THEORY

The main guidelines of the reflexive modernization theory have been presented in the works such as: Risk Society by Ulrich Beck (1992) and The Consequences of Modernity (1990) by Anthony Giddens, as well as in the collective work by three authors: Ulrich Beck, Anthony Giddens and Scott Lash, Reflexive Modernization: Politics, Tradition and Aesthetics in the Modern Social Order (1994). The main theses boil down to the following argumentation. The developed Western societies have entered a new phase of development, which the founders of the theory named the „second modernity” and which had emerged from the earlier form of the „first modernity”, namely the industrial society.
Its constitutive features consist predominantly in the questioning of the traditional structures, searching for alternatives and constant revision of political choices. The above criteria make it different from the logic of the “first modernity”, which refers to the necessity, stability and constancy of the meanings.

The “second modernity” as a new historical epoch, liberated out of the framework of the classical industrial society and assuming a new shape, has been named by Ulrich Beck the risk society. It is characterized by the global state of uncertainty and danger, “(...) in which the social, political, economical and individual forms of risk became increasingly more prone to escape the control of institutions which in the industrial society performed the monitoring and defensive functions”(Beck 1994:5). This is why the risk society is forced to seek “(...) a delicate balancing between the contradictions of continuity rupture within modernity, reflected in the antagonism between modernity and industrial society, and between industrial society and risk society” (Beck 1992:9). The search for balance between the contradictions resulting from the continuation and turn becomes a modernization problem in itself. It is characterized by creative self-destruction and self-confrontation with consequences for the risk society. Thus, it is directed towards solving its own problems generated by the risk (Beck, Bonss, Lau 2003).

In the last twenty years, Poland’s higher education system has found itself in a similar situation. It has been forced to search for the state of relative balance between the contradictions resulting – on the one hand – from the need for continuing the precious development policy of the higher education, which refers to the traditionally dictated schemes and models, while, on the other hand, the necessity to undertake modernization challenges imposed by the knowledge/risk society.

From this point of view, the academic year of 2007/2008 can be considered a proper moment for an evaluation of the hitherto phase of the modernization of the higher education system. For the first time since the beginning of the transformation, in this period the overall number of students decreased by 0.02% in relation to the previous year. In the academic year of 1990/1991, there were 112 higher education institutions in Poland, where the total of 403 800 students were enrolled. Seventeen years later a rapid growth was observed and in the academic year of 2007/2008 there were 455 higher education institutions on the education market, including those of the Departments of National Defense, Internal Affairs and Administration, where 1937 400 students were enrolled. Among all higher education institutions, 131 had the status of a public university, with 1276 900 persons studying there (65.9% of all students), including 301 900 first-year
students. In comparison to the previous academic year, the number of students decreased by 1.9% [Szkoły wyższe... 2008:17-18].

Aside from state higher education institutions, which offered their students full-time, evening, part-time (weekend) or extramural courses, private schools have begun to appear and develop since 1991. The statistical data of GUS (Central Statistical Office) indicate that within the period of seventeen years (1990-2007) a rapid development of private HE institutions have been observed; from “zero” level in the academic year of 1990/91 to 324 HE institutions in the academic year of 2007/2008, with 660 500 students (34.1% of all students). Additionally, 33 state vocational higher schools should also be included in the data [Szkoły wyższe...2008:18-19]. Thus, one of the significant results of the marketization of the higher education in Poland has been the process of quantitative transformations of this sector, in consequence of which the stratification of higher education institutions have become more pronounced, with the division into better and worse ones [cf. Domański 2005].

In this period, changes in the higher education system were nothing out of the ordinary, as similar processes could be observed in many European countries as well as in New Zealand and Australia. However, what differentiates the development of Poland’s higher education system from that of other countries, especially from post-socialist states, is the visible radicalism of these changes [Simonova, Antonowicz 2006]. Data for the 30 OECD member-states indicate that in 2006, 27% of the population of these countries aged 25-64 had a second degree higher education. In Poland, the this index was 18% and 8% for the first degree [OECD 2008:42]. Another index, calculated in relation to the population graduating from a secondary school in a given year, indicates that in the OECD countries in 1995 37% of young people began second degree education, while after ten years (in 2006) this proportion increased to 56%. In Poland, the index have grown as follows: in 1995 one in three secondary school graduates (36%) began the second degree education; in 2000, two in three graduates (65%) saw it necessary to study further, while in 2006 their proportion increased up to 78%. With such an index, Poland was in second place among the OECD member-states, ex quo with Iceland (78% and after Australia (84%) [OECD 2008:58]. The above-quoted qualitative data document the pace of transformations within the sector of higher education. They tell nothing of the consequences of these transformations.
THE CONSEQUENCES OF THE MODERNIZATION OF THE HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEM

In the reflexive modernization theory, the analytical category employed in researching the consequences of modernizing actions is the notion of individualization. Individualization refers to a process by which people are disconnected from collective social structures. As these structures weaken and disintegrate, institutions (e.g. family, government departments, trades unions, universities) are also going through an individualization process in that they are being hollowed out from within as they themselves lose the ability to assert collective authority and control. In living individual, unconnected lives, people are only partly integrated into society through its institutions (e.g. as students, voters, taxpayers, and car drivers). They are therefore dependent on those institutions that facilitate these interactions (e.g. schools, taxation office, and government agencies). It can assume two connotations. “On the one hand, individualization means the disintegration of previously existing social forms – for example, the increasing fragility such categories as class and social status, gender roles, family, neighbourhood etc. (...) The answer points to the second aspect individualization. It is, simply, that in modern societies new demands, control and constraints are being imposed on individuals. Through the job market, the welfare state and the institutions, people are tied into a network of regulations conditions, provisos. From pension right to insurance protection, from educational grands to tax rates.: all these are institutional reference points marking out the horizon within which modern thinking, planning and action must take place” [Beck, Beck-Gernsheim 2002:2]. In this context, individualization can be regarded on the level of organization/institution (trade unions, higher education schools, banks, governmental agencies, etc), which signifies the extent their weakened ability to exert power and control over as a result of the modernization changes. In reference to individual persons, on the other hand, it is a sign of liberation out of the hitherto social norms. Individuals pulled out from their traditional structures are left to themselves, their individual fate, thus becoming susceptible to risk. The paper concentrates on three aspects of individualization: differentiation, choice and disembedding.

DIFFERENTIATION OF THE HIGHER EDUCATION SECTOR

In an article published by The Economist [2005], Adrian Wooldridge examines the conditioning of changes in higher education, stating: “Mass higher education is forcing universities to become more diverse, more global and much
more competitive” [Wooldridge 2005]. Under the slogan of ‘differentiation’, higher schools diversify their educational missions, strive for more specialization by developing diverse research faculties and curricula. The critical factor which enforced differentiation in the higher education sector in Poland were the stipulations contained in the 1990 Act, which created the conditions for dynamic development of non-public higher education schools. The same institutional framework served as a platform for HE courses organized by extra-mural learning institutions (Polish Academy of Sciences). The 1997 Act of June 26th on higher vocational schools [Journal of Laws No 96 Item 590, amended] created the conditions for the development of vocational higher schools, licensed to grant the degree of licencjat (bachelor) or inżynier (engineer) [Szkoły wyższe...2008:17]. The above described institutional solutions contributed to the rapid development of non-state higher education system, which addressed the students’ expectations and developed regardless of the public higher schools. At present, their role is to supplement the state higher schools. [cf. Simonova Antonowicz 2006].

One of the forms differentiating the higher education sector is the type of the academic course. In the academic year of 2008/2009, the number of students taking the full-time course amounted to 928 100 persons, which is 48.1% of all students, while 999 600 persons (i.e. 51.9% of the total number of students) attended the part-time and evening courses. At public universities, nearly two-thirds (63.7%) of students attended full-time courses, while in non-public schools non-full-time students were decidedly in a majority (81.7% of the total number of students) [Szkoły wyższe... 2008:26].

DE-MYTHOLOGIZING OF INDIVIDUAL CHOICE IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Individualization in the context of choice means that „… each person’s biography is removed from given determinations and placed in his or her own hands, open and dependent on decisions. […] Individualization of life situations and processes thus means that biographies become self-reflexive; socially prescribed biography is transformed into biography that is self-produced and continues to be produced. Decisions on education, profession, job, place of residence, spouse, number of children and so forth, with all the secondary decisions implied, no longer can be, they must be made” [Beck 1992:135]. In the modernization processes, the category of choice gains a special significance for an individual as it allows for a self-reflexive biography to be realized, a biography which is dependent solely on the individual and not created by traditional structures.
In the context of higher education, the practice of individual choice is manifested in its fullest in developing professional qualifications. Obtaining higher education is perceived in the categories of investment which is to bring a reward in the near future in the form of a satisfactory level of salary, greater possibilities of professional development, greater social prestige and decreased risk of unemployment. However, it is the economic returns for education are the most crucial in individual decision-making in terms of investing time and money in education: the individual rate of return and the public rate of return [OECD 2008:185]. The former one reflects the relations between future wages and education costs of an individual, while the latter defines the relation between the social expenditures, such as the costs which the government spends on education and future returns in the form of higher tax intake. The published data for 2004 for the OECD countries indicate that the individual rate of return for all OECD countries was on average slightly higher than 5% [OECD 2008:182]. There were no significant differences between men and women (respectively, 12% and 11%). Men received the greatest benefits from completing higher education in the Czech Republic (29.1%), Portugal, (23.9%), Poland (22.8%) and Hungary (19.8%). For the full picture of the issue it must be added that in 2004 in these countries the indices of second-degree higher education completion in the 25-64 age group were within the 13% and 18% bracket, and thus decidedly below the average (i.e. 27%) for all OECD countries. Higher level education brought relatively small rewards in Sweden (5.1%), Norway (7.4%), Spain (7.6%) and Germany (8%) (OECD 2008: 186). In turn, public rates of return for education for all the OECD countries in 2004 amounted to 11% for men and 9% for women [OECD 2008:183].

‘DISEMBEDDING’ FROM HETECONTROLNOMOUS RELATIONSHIPS

The term of “disembedding” has been introduced by Anthony Giddens for the situation of “the lifting out of social relations from local contexts of interaction and their restructuring across indefinite spans of time-space” [Giddens 1990:21]. Reflexive modernization theory conceptualizes disembedding as arising out of individualization. It refers to how people and institutions are lifted out from the taken-for granted heteronomous structures of industrial modernity (e.g. family roles, class, race, gender, education, knowledge) which are then replaced by heterodoxical contingencies (Beck 1994). “At the same time as the liberation or ‘disembedding’ occurs, new forms of reintegration and control appear (re-embedding)” [Beck, Beck-Gernsheim 2002:203].
The use of the term ‘disembedding’ in relation to higher education allows one to notice completely new areas of the modernization process, such as the emergence of new heterodox relationships. One of such areas, as of yet not quite utilized in practice, are the possibilities of cooperation between business and science. Critical notes so far directed at such cooperation indicate the need to free it from previous heteronomous structures. The basis for formulating such a conclusion has been provided by the empirical study commissioned by the Ministry of Science and Higher Education in 2006, the objective of which was to identify factors affecting the cooperation between entrepreneurs and research centers [Raport ...2006]. The study has been conducted on a group of 173 managers (82 of whom did and 91 who did not cooperate with research centers) 71 academic employees have been interviewed. The study results indicate that only 9% of enterprises invested in research and development. Such a low level of expenditure is practically manifested in the number of patented inventions. In 2005, in Poland there were only as few as 2.7 patent per one million citizens, while in the European Union there were 133.6 patents [Raport... 2006]. Vast majority of interviewed researchers declared that the research centers do in fact address entrepreneurs with offers of cooperation, however, it is met with the lack of initiative or interest on the part of the business sector. In their opinion entrepreneurs are not willing to participate in financing any research due to purely pragmatic reasons. On the other hand, opinions expressed by the entrepreneurs reveal their ignorance in terms of the possibility of undertaking cooperation by one of the parties, which they partially explain by there being no tradition of innovation-based entrepreneurship in Poland. The last issue can be perceived as a manifestation of the current lack of innovatory power on the part of entrepreneurs. It is also curious that most of the interviewed entrepreneurs (56%) see no need of such cooperation.

Another of heterodox relationships is the emerging academic entrepreneurship. It is in the preliminary institutionalization phase. The first entrepreneurship incubator was founded at the Warsaw University in 1998, it was however, only the new Act on Higher Education [2005 Act of 27th July, The Law on Higher Education, Article 86, Item 1-3] and the act on certain forms of supporting innovation activity which started to stimulate universities to develop such a form of activity, occurring at the juncture of science and business. An incubator can be created in the form of a general academic entity or a trading company or a foundation. Also, the Department for Implementation and Innovation has been created in the Ministry of Science and Higher Education, the analyses of which indicate that 49% of incubators are registered as foundations [Dąbrowski 2006]. Institutional basis have been created for academic entrepreneurship incubators and technol-
ogy transfer centers in order to make better use of the intellectual and technical potential of universities as well as the transfer of academic research results to economy. Academic entrepreneurship research indicates that the basic motive for academic entrepreneurs locating their firms in entrepreneurship incubators or in science and technology parks are financial reasons as well as infrastructural and organizational facilities [Nagrodkiewicz 2007]. One of such incubators is the Łódź Regional Science and Technology Park (Łódzki Regionalny Park Naukowo-Techniczny), founded in 2006 [Nauka i Biznes 2006]. Its purpose is to attract and support new companies created on the basis of academic research results. They can make use of the facilitated access to: specialized university laboratories, technological resources, expertise and specialist advice as well as direct contact with university professors.

NEW SOCIAL RISK GENERATED BY THE HIGHER EDUCATION SECTOR

Risk is an intrinsic feature of the contemporary society. It is associated with dangers which are unintended and unpredicted results of the modernization processes. “By nature, then, risks have something to do with anticipation, with destruction that has not yet happened but is threatening, and of course in that sense risks are already real today” [Beck 1992:33]. What type of real risks may the higher education sector be facing? The opening of the higher education to privatization, competition and marketization has been reflected in the increasing risk. The study conducted within the scope of the international NESOR project of 2006–2008 indicates the following social risks:

– degradation of human capital – surplus of highly qualified labor force who work beneath their qualifications, accepting worse working conditions (and lower wages) in order not to fall out of the work market into unemployment;

– a new sphere of frustrating inequalities caused by unemployment of persons with higher education (studies indicate that 10% of new employees is recruited from secondary and tertiary school graduates, while 90% of new employees is recruited from vocational and technical schools graduates);

– emigration of educated people. Such emigration is referred to as human capital flight (‘brain drain’) in public debate;

– digital exclusion caused by unsuccessful accession of new information and communications technology. While it mostly affects poorly educated people, according to the study of Społeczna Diagnoza 2007 (Social Diagnosis 2007), as
much as 67% of people with primary education or lower never uses a computer, the internet or a mobile phone and only 3% of them uses these new technologies. In comparison, 73% people with higher education (of the first and second degree) employs the new technologies (81% of students), and 7% uses none of them (only 1% of students) [NESOR 2009].

One of the significant sources generating uncertainty and risk is the gradual retraction of the government from financing educational institutions. Such a tendency can be noticed not only in Poland but also in other EU countries. This does not include the money expended by the state as calculated per one student. Expenses of this type remained on a stable level in the OECD countries in the years 1995-2000, while they have increased on average by 11% in 2000-2005. Poland, with a 39% increase in expenditure per student in 2000-2005, has taken the second place after Greece (59%) and before Austria (37%). Such a significant increase in expenditure in Poland and other countries is related to a large increase in the number of students. In Poland, in the years 2000-2005 the number of students have increased by 25% on average. A greater increase on the number of students have been observed only in Hungary (51%), in Greece (48%), Iceland (48%), Slovakia (40%), the Czech Republic (38%) and in Switzerland (27%). [OECD 2008:224].

In 2005, the OECD countries expenditure on a higher school student amounted on average 15559 $ (including the R&D expenditure; excluding these costs, the average amounted to 11512 $). In case of the 19 EU states, the same average amounted to between 10474 $ and 6990 $. In case of Poland, the data was, respectively: 5593 $ and 4883 $. These are the lowest results among the thirty OECD countries, and among the six so-called partner-states, only Estonia (3869 $) and Russia (3421$) have lower expenditure per student. Developed countries such as: the USA (24370 $), Switzerland (21734 $), Sweden (15946 $) and Norway (15552 $) disburse several times more money for educating a student than Poland [OECD 2008:218].

**REFLEXIVITY IN HIGHER EDUCATION**

In the risk-society, modernization is of reflexive nature, although it is not reflective, as the term might suggest. Reflexivity does not imply more self-awareness of people but rather a magnified awareness of the fact that a full control of individuals over nature, technology, social context, etc. is virtually impossible. Nevertheless, “(...) the more modernized the society becomes, the more active individuals (subjects) have ability of influencing the social conditions of their
The particular role of reflexivity is revealed in the course of structural transformations. Scott Lash defines it thus: “In reflexive modernization, the structural change pressurized the agencies in order to liberate them from their old structures, forces individuals to become free from the normative expectations of the institutions of the first modernity and encourages them to become involved in the reflexive monitoring of such structures and self-monitoring of one’s own identity upon its creation” [Lash 1994:170]. Thus, through reflexivity, organizations/institutions as well as individuals are freed from their limitations and increase their potential as far as the monitoring of the structures created and of their own identity are concerned.

In the context of the higher education sector transformations reflexivity is manifested in the form of the monitoring and control function by the ministry of science and higher education in relation to the tasks realized by universities, such as with regard to the quality of education, scientific research conducted, financial operations or student enrollment, etc. Here, three following issues are of importance: 1) difficulties in measuring the quality of education; 2) information asymmetry in the higher education market and 3) teaching staff shortage [Simonova, Antonowicz 2006].

Difficulties related to measuring the quality of education have appeared at the very beginning of the modernization process and have been related mainly with rapid development of the educational services market and the accompanying uncontrolled development of non-public higher schools. Such development dynamics has been partially caused by the demographic baby boom entering the market of educational services, which lead governments and political parties to insistently promote the ideology of constructing a market economy, which needs highly qualified employees [NESOR 2009]. Increasing educational aspirations of the society as well as the growing market value of higher education led directly to the rise of a conflict between the quantitative growth of students and the need to maintain quality standards of education. This has significant implications in the form of reduced quality standards of education and significantly influenced the subsequent process of implementing the recommendations of the Bologna Process. Researchers dealing with these problems see the reason for such state in the lack of competition in the market of educational services and inadequate control of government agencies over higher education [OECD 2006:9].

Due to the increasing number of universities, it has been proved necessary to establish accreditation committee. They evaluate the compliance of the implementation of educational standards in a given field of study and a number of teaching staff employed (i.e. staffing minimums). Among the few currently oper-
ating accreditation committees, the State Accreditation Committee (Państwowa Komisja Akredytacyjna, PKA) is the one whose decisions and evaluations have legal power. It is responsible to the minister of science and higher education for assessing the quality standards of education in universities and for opinions on proposals of new courses of study in higher education. Setting up an accreditation committee demonstrates the need for regulation and control of universities from both the state and the academia. Attempts are also made to include employers as consultants and experts into the PKA in order to use their assistance to eliminate or at least reduce the disparities that occur between formal graduate qualifications and the expectations of employers in practice. [Forum Akademickie 2009].

Information asymmetry is a natural consequence of educational services market development and the universality of higher education. Both these factors cause turbulence in the institutional environment of universities, leading to a shortage of information about their activities. In a stable environment, information about universities are generally based on their reputation but in a competitive environment they are more untested and sometimes contrary to the quality of service provided. In order to organize the chaos of the information rankings are attempted which through classification of various educational institutions are becoming an important source of information for many people in making decisions about the choice of university and field of study. The importance of these rankings increases with the number of students who, by bearing the costs of education, become consumers of educational services and thus expect proper quality of service. Regardless of the reliability of the data presented by these rankings, they are an important link in academic public relations.

The quantitative growth of educational institutions and the number of students per academic staff member has caused a high demand for teachers. The academic labor market formed this way has began to pose new problems for public and private universities in the course of their hiring process. In the case of the former, academic employment was dependent on the financial constraints imposed by the state budget. In turn, private schools had not educated their own teaching staff, thus becoming forced to hire teachers from public universities in order to meet the requirements posed on them by the accreditation committee. Thus, in practice, some teachers are employed in public and private universities, thus working more than one job which in turn has its consequences for the level of education.
SUMMARY

In periods of great modernization breakthroughs, the traditional concepts of the role of entire social groups and institutions, culture and society have changed. Higher education and the institution of the university have been subjected to these processes by neoliberal institutional arrangements, creating the conditions for its privatization, marketization and competitiveness. This resulted in the negation of the former ideal of higher education – nationally oriented, geared towards the inculcation of national consciousness and the construction and bonding of national community, which has been replaced by a vision of higher education oriented towards entrepreneurial activities and administered by economic rationality, similar to that employed in the management of large corporations [see Kwiek 2004]. Modernization of this type necessitates individualization of the behavior of institutions / organizations and individuals by their liberation from heteronomous dependence and reconstructing new structures by reflexive monitoring and control of emerging social risks.

The mass of higher education prevents its continued public funding. The process of privatization of higher education, understood as a gradual process of withdrawal of state financing of educational institutions, is associated with at least three issues. Firstly, the former vision of a welfare state is re-examined, in which the state gradually withdraws from its role in financing public services. Secondly, the development of the knowledge-based society engenders a “soft revolution” in which knowledge replaces physical resources as the driving force of economic development. Universities are becoming an important element of the knowledge-based economy, the purpose of which is to train skilled employees [see Karczmarczuk 2010]. Thirdly, globalization processes cause the blurring of “distances” between sectors and cause the transformation of higher education institutions in a similar manner as they do business.

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