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DOUBLE DIPLOMA AS A TOOL FOR IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF HIGHER EDUCATION

ABSTRACT

The article examines the issue of double diplomas in the context of improving the quality of education, using the example of Polish universities. It analyses the educational market of universities in Poland.

The implementation of international double degree programs affects the formation of the innovative educational environment of the university and contributes to the development of students' set of key competencies and the formation of human capital. The article describes the advantages and disadvantages of participating in double degree programs for students, faculty, and higher education, in general. It further shows the influence of the double diploma program on the quality of training of highly qualified specialists. The development and implementation of double degree educational programs in practice correspond to the general strategic interests of the development of Polish universities in the modern educational space from the point of view of improving the quality of education and scientific research, increasing the competitiveness of universities and generally comply with the main principles and provisions of the Bologna process. An algorithm for the implementation of double diploma programs has been developed, which will contribute to the internationalization of higher education, and its integration into the world educational space.

KEYWORDS

higher education, double degrees, Bologna process, integration, innovation, competencies, quality of education.

In the conditions of globalization, the rapid expansion of the information space, and the urgent need for the development of innovative technologies [19] in the modern world, the issues of ensuring equal access to education [2] and the training of highly qualified specialists are acute. A characteristic feature of modernity is the production of resources, and investment in intellectual human capital, which is the most effective way of allocating resources. The transition of the leading countries to a knowledge-based economy is a necessary component of the information society, which depends on the modernization and improvement of the quality of education and science and is an important indicator of their authority in the world [17].

Education in higher educational institutions must meet all the demands of the economic and political stability of society, that are put forward as a strategic resource and use all the opportunities provided by the modern development of society, business, and technology, to train specialists capable of solving problems [10, 23]. The experience of studying abroad and the availability of diplomas from several foreign universities are an indicator of a specialist's competitiveness when looking for a job and a guarantee of a successful career and quality education. The internationalization of education has become a necessity for its integration into the world market of educational services and a necessary condition for improving the quality of education [9, 11, 15].

The development strategy changed during the accession of the countries to the Bologna Process [21], which led to the creation of a single space of European higher education and opened up many opportunities for students and teachers in Poland to participate in double-degree programs. Scientific potential, intellectual and educational resources of Poland, and connections with international universities have created an innovative educational program designed to increase not only the level of education but also international academic mobility.

Therefore, this is precisely what determined the purpose of the article - to consider the main features of double-diploma programs as a means of improving the quality of education in Poland in the context of integration into the world educational space.

The creation of a unique space in the European educational system has political, economic, scientific, and educational goals: to promote political, diplomatic, and economic dialogue with the peoples of Europe on the basis of mutual understanding and respect, to support innovation to make the EU economy more globally competitive, to create a generation of knowledge and ideas with a synergistic effect for international cooperation in science and education [16].

This is not the first year the European Union has been investing in programs to increase student mobility and attract talented young people. The international double degree program is one of the most promising international education programs in Europe, which allows the student to obtain a higher international education at a lower price and gain a competitive advantage in the workplace.

The concept of double degrees appeared in Europe in the 80s of the last century. The main purpose of this type of program is to transfer the diplomas obtained in European universities to the conditions of the European labour market. The creation of the Erasmus program was an additional effort for the development of double degree programs.

The recommendations of the Council of Europe define a joint diploma as a diploma under the educational program of two universities or a university and another institution, developed based on their educational programs, or one that can be developed, with the help of other institutions [6, 17].

Upon completion of the study program, several types of diplomas are awarded: a combined diploma with two or more recognized majors; a diploma of a foreign or domestic university; a foreign university diploma in addition to the national diploma; a national diploma with an indication of additional courses in the form of an additional certificate without legal force.

Today, obtaining joint diplomas in European countries is mainly determined by inter-university agreements, since national legislation does not determine the types of diplomas that can be awarded. Therefore, the practice of implementing joint educational programs, where students receive two or more national diplomas from partner universities, has become widespread.

A double diploma is two or more national diplomas officially awarded by two or more universities that jointly implement an integrated educational program that includes curricula and programs, teaching methods and assessment of student skills,

recognizing the results of studies at partner universities, and availability of common program management structures.

Dual degree programs, namely their development and implementation, are time-consuming and very costly. This requires a comprehensive review of educational programs and the content of academic disciplines taught at universities and partner universities abroad.

The procedure for the development of double degree programs consists of the selection of universities-partners and specialties; entering into a contract with a partner university to obtain a double diploma from a joint educational program; discussion of the management structure and quality control system of students' acquired knowledge; development of programs and plans for disciplines; integration of curricula and programs; determining the quality of education; planning study opportunities at a partner university; obtaining licenses for a new program; determining the possibilities of engaging teachers of partner universities; development and implementation of the labor payment system; determination of tuition fees for students; development of marketing plans for the promotion of the program; recruitment of students; implementation of double degree programs and their quality control.

A large number of double degree programs has emerged as a result of bilateral cooperation between universities. The development of joint programs in European universities has grown rapidly in recent years thanks to the financial support and programs of the European Union with regional and national funds. However, problems arise during the implementation of the programs, as they do not meet the requirements of various European educational structures. These problems include:

- lack of funds;
- recognition of joint degrees;
- training improvement and management;
- management efficiency;
- synchronization of student exchange to different countries.

Expanding joint or dual programs is further complicated by the need for significant funding both during development and implementation. The cost of such programs depends on the following factors:

- the level of remuneration of program participants - teachers and teaching staff;
- work form of foreign teachers;
- duration of the studies;
- teaching methods and technologies;
- opportunities to use online technologies;
- use of laboratories, office equipment, etc.

It should be noted that the role of network participants and students is crucial to cover these financial costs. However, it is quite clear that in the first case, the low interest of universities in such programs is understandable, and in the second case, the possibility of an educational institution participating in such programs depends on the financial status of students. The solution to this problem can be seen in providing programs with funding from partner states, trust funds, and businesses [22].

The problem with the recognition of double diplomas is that there is no corresponding regulatory and legal framework in the countries that participate in the programs.

Therefore, it is necessary to agree on joint programs, training methods, program structure, and mutual recognition of training periods. Universities offer double and joint degree programs, by the Bologna Declaration, with three cycles: bachelor – master – doctorate [21].

The Dublin descriptors and the European Qualifications Framework formulated the main requirements for the qualifications of the three cycles. The bachelor's program should, first of all, consider the theory and principles of industry research, form innovative competencies, and use a new approach to solving complex problems [1]. In the second stage, the problems of scientific and innovative research, the ability to solve research problems, the building of new knowledge, and the integration of knowledge from different fields should be investigated and critically considered. The third stage is where decisions are made regarding fundamental problems and the introduction of innovations in research, as well as the rethinking of existing knowledge and practice in the professional sphere; demonstrating innovative thinking, autonomy, and the ability to develop new ideas or processes.

When developing training programs, the main requirement is the definition of training goals, which are aimed not only at the management of the institution but also at future employment [14, 24]. If so, the program must meet the requirements of quality assurance systems curricula. Educational materials, developed in the process of dialogue with the professional and not only the academic community, help to effectively shape and develop the content of educational programs.

Such a unique opportunity to use the experience of foreign partner universities in the field of competence approach and other educational innovations for the development of new educational programs is given to Polish universities when participating in the double degree program [7].

Course programs are a set of modules offered by the universities participating in the joint program. At the same time, some modules are compulsory courses at partner universities and are linked by the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) [8].

Although there are many different ways to implement co-educational curricula, the the principal possibilities are:

- completely identical programs at partner universities – the parallel study of identical courses/modules, teaching methods, and testing procedures;
- comparable core curriculum modules/courses, but different specializations offered by individual partners;
- interconnected courses/modules of various specialties, a single curriculum.

Some courses are taught in the native language, while others are taught in the language of the partner university or English. Under all types of programs, students are required to study at the partner university for a certain period either in the language of the partner university or in English, but some courses may be taught in their native language [4, 5].

During the implementation of the program, each of the partners contributes their achievements, methods, learning technologies, and resources. In this way, it is possible to form separate groups of competencies that complement each other, which allows for the possibility of jointly developed programs aimed at training students at each

partner university. The synergy of each party's unique experience allows students to gain academic and cultural experience in different countries.

Special attention is paid to quality by individual national procedures or requirements of international organizations. Program review by internal or external experts (professors or representatives of relevant accrediting agencies) is a mandatory procedure in the planning and implementation of a dual degree program.

The university's commitment to creating and implementing dual degree programs is an innovation for students, faculty, and the university as a whole.

Intensive language training, new skills, and knowledge at the level of international educational standards are all benefits of the program. After receiving diplomas from Polish and foreign universities, recognized as participants of all educational institutions, the demand for graduates by international and foreign companies rises significantly. They start with a competitive advantage in the labour market [13].

Teachers also enjoy numerous advantages such as the improvement of professional qualifications due to the use of the experience of foreign colleagues, new technologies in education and information technologies, gaining access to new sources of information, use of innovations, and participation in joint scientific research.

For an educational institution, participation in such a program provides an opportunity to contribute to the innovative development of the university [12], since in the process of implementing the program, innovative methods and technologies of student education are used. This increases the rating of the university and provides the opportunity to receive additional income. Furthermore, it develops the educational environment and scientific potential and provides new opportunities for international cooperation in the educational and scientific spheres.

Cooperation with foreign universities within the framework of international educational programs allows students and teachers to develop new skills, stimulates the introduction of new educational technologies in the educational process, and ensures the academic mobility and success of students and teachers. For Polish education on the world market, this is an increase in reputation, while international accreditation of educational programs provides a guarantee of high-quality educational services. Creation and implementation of comprehensive international educational programs that meet the needs of potential employers, customers, and consumers of educational services, preparation of resource provision (purchase of laboratory equipment, software, professional development of specialists and teaching staff, scientists, administration staff) will create a new image of the university [25].

The goal of Polish universities in the implementation of „Dual Diploma” programs is to improve the quality of education (best practices of foreign partner universities), and to increase their competitiveness in the global educational space, advertise the investment attractiveness of the educational institution by increasing the competitiveness of graduates and the quality of their professional knowledge. They also strive to obtain the opportunity to improve the qualifications of teachers; attract additional sources of funding, and obtain new international connections and international academic mobility. The Double Diploma Program is designed for those who planned to get a higher education degree in the USA or Western European countries but could not because

of the high cost of tuition fees [26]. At the present, you can save time and significant amounts of money by getting an American, British, or Swiss education through „Dual Diploma” programs at universities in countries such as Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Germany, and Greece. Participants of Double Diploma programs study in English at universities in Warsaw (Prague, Bratislava, Budapest, Athens, or Berlin) under a joint program with a partner university from the USA, Great Britain, or Switzerland at the cost of tuition of a local university - 1,500-9,000 Euros per year. In comparison: the cost of studying at universities in the USA, Great Britain, and Switzerland is \$20,000-\$80,000 per year.

The International Double Diploma program not only allows its participant to receive two prestigious higher education diplomas from two different countries but can also significantly save the time and money needed to study and live abroad. Living expenses (accommodation, food, etc.) in Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Greece, and Germany are only 350-800 Euro per month, while in the USA, Great Britain, or Switzerland - 1500-2500 dollars per month.

The number of Double Degree programs has increased significantly in recent years. Most programs were developed as a result of bilateral cooperation between universities. The most popular areas include business and management (47.3%), engineering, and production (39.2%).

Definition of the Double Diploma program is a program based on the compatibility and synchronization of the educational programs of the partner universities, which are characterized by the acceptance of joint obligations by the parties on such issues as defining the goals of the program, preparing the curriculum, organizing the educational process, and qualifications.

The joint development of programs and curricula is the key to improving quality in higher education, taking into account world experience, because the quality of education primarily depends on the competence and experience of the teacher and the modern technologies and teaching methods that are used. The educational process in universities should be aimed at the integration of science, education, and production (business). Particular attention should be paid to the need to comply with the principles of TQM and the quality standards of the ISO series in the educational process.

Most Polish universities have special programs for obtaining two diplomas. This is an international practice based on mutually beneficial cooperation between Polish universities and other countries. The double degree program in Poland is offered by many universities: The Vistula University in Warsaw (Poland) & Centria University in Kokkola (Finland); Management; Information Technology (Engineering studies; The Lazarski University in Warsaw (Poland) & Coventry University in Coventry (Great Britain); Business Economics; International Relations and European Studies; International Business Economics; International Relations – Diplomacy; International Relations – European Administration.

The Kozminski University offers many programs with a double degree: Bachelor in Management jointly with DHBW-Mannheim, a famous German business school, Bachelor in Management jointly with Kedge Business School (France), joint Master's programs in Management with the universities of Bradford (Great Britain), School of Management Lancaster University (Great Britain), Grenoble School of Management

(France), Católica-Lisbon (Portugal), in the field of finance – with the University of Porto (Portugal), in the field of European business – from the world-renowned business school ESCP Europe, the oldest in Europe.

The University of Social Psychology offers dual degree programs in psychology in partnership with California State University Stanislaus.

Collegium Civitas offers its students the opportunity to obtain a compatible European degree in the Master's program „Human Rights and Genocide” in cooperation with Kingston University (Great Britain), University of Siena (Italy), and European University Viadrina (Germany). The university also has a double master's degree in European studies jointly with the University of West Virginia (USA) and the University of Tartu (Estonia).

By examining more closely, The University of Coventry and the Lazarski University in Warsaw, both of which develop and annually update educational programs in the fields of economics (Business Economics) and international relations (International Relations) for bachelor's and master's degrees, we can find official confirmation that the quality of the knowledge received is compliant with the standards of both universities. All coursework, exams, and even test papers and essays are double-checked: by teachers from Lazarski and Coventry. Furthermore, the selection of the teaching staff is carried out very carefully, and the university always attracts new specialists and invites new teachers.

Constant adjustment of programs leads to the mobility of learning needs and to the improvement of students' readiness for a real career, which emphasizes the acquisition of practical knowledge. Communication in a multinational team (Vietnam, Iran, Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan), especially in double programs, prepares students to work in international corporations, because they acquire knowledge about the structures and methods of management. Students learn to think creatively and analytically, and also study current political, religious, cultural, and economic issues. Thanks to such a large amount of knowledge and practical skills, Lazarski graduates have employment opportunities both in Poland and abroad.

Of course, such a high level of education does not go unnoticed internationally. One of the latest achievements of the university was its recognition by the European Commission as one of the 8% of best universities in the world. By right, this is a university where success is taught (one of Lazarski's slogans is: Sukces można studiować. „Success can be studied!”).

The implementation of a nationwide educational and scientific program allows for the fulfillment of the main mission of Polish universities to create a space with a multicultural nature of learning.

To successfully achieve this goal, it is necessary to use the latest achievements in the field of science and educational technologies by integrating them into the world system of higher education. The integration of universities into the global scientific and educational space is carried out by participating in international educational and scientific programs, studying, analyzing, and using advanced educational technologies, and active participation in international meetings, conferences, symposia, etc. All these conditions are fulfilled thanks to the Double Diploma Program.

International mobility is manifested by the fact that students spend 2 years in one country (Poland), and in the third year decide to go to another country (for example, to Switzerland, Canada, Germany, Great Britain, or the USA). This is an opportunity to immerse oneself in another culture, obtain future business connections around the world, as well as increase knowledge of foreign languages and gain international experience.

The double degree program implies student work on two university programs simultaneously. This can be done either in the same educational institution or in different universities, most often in different countries. The advantages of such an education are that during the period of study, the student masters two programs, and receives two diplomas from two different universities. During the entire studies, all coursework, examination papers, and even tests and essays are double-checked: by teachers of both universities, which proves that the level of acquired knowledge fully meets the standards of both universities. The main advantages of the double degree program are the saving of time and material resources since during 4 years of study in Poland it is possible to obtain two bachelor's degrees in the chosen specialty at the same time. During their studies, students establish business contacts for the future, because they are in an international environment and can communicate with people from 150 different countries, which will significantly improve their language and communication skills.

The opportunity to receive a quality education at the best universities in the world allows graduates to become more competitive in the labor market and greatly increases their chances of future employment. In addition, when studying in Schengen countries, students can travel throughout Europe, and when studying in the US or Canada, they can travel and explore all of America. Gaining international experience makes students competitive in the professional community [26].

Every year, the number of foreign students in Polish universities is growing. This is due not only to the affordable cost and simplified enrollment system for foreigners but also to the high level of education and recognition of the Polish diploma in European countries. Affordable education in Poland provides more opportunities to find a prestigious job abroad and make a successful career.

Prospects for further research in this direction are the availability of new contracts. Currently, the universities of Poland and Ukraine (Kharkiv) are discussing the possibility of introducing double diplomas, which was the result of a meeting between representatives of leading universities in Lublin and the Ukrainian Engineering and Pedagogical Academy (Kharkiv) and Kharkiv National University named after V. N. Karazina. The „Study in Lublin” project coordinators note that „in Lublin universities, foreign students have an individual schedule. For example, they study for a year in Lublin, defend their diploma work, then return to their university in Ukraine, defend their work here, and receive two diplomas” [18].

Thus, knowledge of foreign languages and an international diploma open excellent prospects for a career. For Polish universities, such agreements with European educational institutions are beneficial because the status and prestige of the university are increased. By accepting foreign students and sending their students to foreign schools, the institute strives to meet the standards of educational programs of the international system. In addition, it is a good opportunity to exchange experience and gain useful information regarding teaching methods, the introduction of new technologies in the teaching process, and general development.

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PODWÓJNY DYPLOM JAKO NARZĘDZIE PODNOSZENIA JAKOŚCI SZKOLNICTWA WYŻSZEGO

STRESZCZENIE

Artykuł analizuje problematykę podwójnych dyplomów w kontekście podnoszenia jakości kształcenia, na przykładzie polskich uczelni. Dokonano analizy rynku edukacyjnego szkół wyższych w Polsce.

Realizacja międzynarodowych programów podwójnego dyplomu wpływa na kształtowanie innowacyjnego środowiska edukacyjnego uczelni oraz przyczynia się do rozwoju zestawu kompetencji kluczowych studentów i kształtowania kapitału ludzkiego. Opisano zalety i wady uczestnictwa w programach podwójnego dyplomu dla studentów, wykładowców i ogólnie szkolnictwa wyższego. Ujawniono wpływ programu podwójnego dyplomowania na jakość kształcenia wysoko wykwalifikowanych specjalistów. Rozwój i realizacja programów kształcenia dwustopniowego, w praktyce odpowiada ogólnym interesom strategicznym rozwoju polskich uczelni we współczesnej przestrzeni edukacyjnej. Z punktu widzenia podnoszenia jakości kształcenia i badań naukowych, a także podnoszenia konkurencyjności uczelni, należy przestrzegać głównych zasad i postanowień Procesu Bolońskiego. Opracowany został algorytm realizacji programów podwójnego dyplomowania, który przyczyni się do umiędzynarodowienia szkolnictwa wyższego i jego integracji ze światową przestrzenią edukacyjną.

SŁOWA KLUCZOWE

szkolnictwo wyższe, podwójne dyplomy, proces boloński, integracja, innowacyjność, kompetencje, jakość kształcenia.



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