

UNIVERSITIES IN POLAND IN THE EYES OF PUBLIC OPINION - CURRENT STATE AND EXPECTATIONS IN LIGHT OF RESEARCH

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Introduction

The article presents the most important conclusions from public opinion polls and knowledge about Polish universities. The poll was conducted by means of the method of direct survey in respondents' homes. The survey was carried out on a representative sample of 1135 inhabitants of Poland at the end of 2011 and at the beginning of 2012.

The survey was conducted using a specially prepared questionnaire containing mainly open questions, focusing on the knowledge and opinions of the surveyed concerning Polish universities. Due to the lack of comparable research concerning Polish universities, the survey presented here is the first attempt to empirically respond to certain scientific questions.

The achieved results show both the current image of a "university" among the population of inhabitants of Poland and the expectations, as well as open and hidden determinants of the perception of universities – especially those assessed negatively and positively. The image is topped with the reconstruction of the idea of a perfect university.

The analysis of collected data highlights a few dimensions, through which universities are perceived. These dimensions are systemic in character. On the basis of analysis of the achieved results an attempt was made to highlight possible directions of development of universities in Poland, paying particular attention to the aspect of communication and marketing.

Characteristics of the surveyed group

In the process of selection of sample for the survey it was decided to find a representation of the population of Poland based on a few criteria. The first criterion is gender – as table 1 shows, the surveyed sample has similar characteristics as the general population of Poland. A slight deviation can be noticed in the number of women who constitute 52,3% of population, which compared to the figures reported by the Central Statistical Office (GUS) for 2010 - 51,7% and 2011 - 52,1 or - 51,5 (NSP 2011) is not an important value.

Table 1. Distribution of the respondents' gender.

Sex	Frequency	Percentage	Percentage of valid responses	Accumulated percentage
Woman	594	52,3	52,3	52,3
Man	541	47,7	47,7	100,0
Total	1135	100,0	100,0	

Source: Own materials.

Table 2. Distribution of age categories among the respondents.

Age	Frequency	Percentage	Percentage of valid responses	Accumulated percentage
15-17	27	2,4	2,4	2,4
18-24	132	11,6	11,6	14,0
25-39	325	28,6	28,6	42,6
40-59	418	36,8	36,8	79,5
>59	233	20,5	20,5	100,0
Total	1135	100,0	100,0	

Source: Own materials.

Due to the low number of respondents from the youngest group, the analysis of responses of this group is treated with caution.

In further part of the article pooled tables with categorized responses to chosen questions are presented. Categorization of data was carried out with the assumption that the empirical material should be arranged on the basis of the respondents' answers and not on the basis of a key adopted in advance. For this reason, important elements of categories are presented as titles of categories, which allows the reader to make up his mind about the situation himself or herself.

Due to the fact that the presented data were an integral part of a greater research project, below they are presented according to the sequence and under numbers from the original questionnaire. This gives the possibility to analyze the connection between questions in the whole survey. Work presenting the whole research project is currently being prepared and should be published at the end of 2012 or at the beginning of 2013.

Question 3. What characteristics would you attribute to typical Polish universities?

Table 3. Answers of respondents to the question:
What characteristics would you attribute to typical Polish universities?

p/n*	What are typical Polish universities like?	Number	% of the number in column	% of answers in column
0	Don't know / hard to say	400	35,2%	23,8%
p	High level (of teaching)	128	11,3%	7,6%
p	Good, very good	87	7,7%	5,2%
0	Knowledge, science	74	6,5%	4,4%
0	Traditional, old	59	5,2%	3,5%
0	Accessible/open	49	4,3%	2,9%
p	Prestige/ renown	50	4,4%	3,0%
n	Not for everyone /hard to be accepted / in big cities	46	4,1%	2,7%
p	Good staff/ staff	45	4,0%	2,7%
p	Educate well	39	3,4%	2,3%
0	Educate	39	3,4%	2,3%
n	Many students / crowded	38	3,3%	2,3%
p	Known / famous	36	3,2%	2,1%
0	Big	28	2,5%	1,7%
n	expensive	28	2,5%	1,7%
n	Impractical/ detached from reality	25	2,2%	1,5%
0	Various faculties	26	2,3%	1,5%
p	Free of charge	22	1,9%	1,3%
n	Fossilized	21	1,9%	1,3%
p	Modern	20	1,8%	1,2%
n	Low level	18	1,6%	1,1%
p	Wisdom	16	1,4%	1,0%
0	Public	16	1,4%	1,0%
n	Poor / under-financed	12	1,1%	0,7%
p	Other positive characteristics	88	7,8%	5,2%
n	Other negative characteristics	52	4,6%	3,1%
0	Other remaining characteristics	218	19,2%	13,0%
	Total	1135	100,0%	100,0%

Source: own materials.

* positive, n-negative, 0-neutral, hard to define.

It is impossible to not start the analysis of responses to the question about characteristics of "typical Polish universities" with the most numerous category (400) „don't know/hard to say"; in which the surveyed declare that they have no knowledge concerning universities or they don't want to reveal this knowledge in the survey. This is one of the highest proportions of lack of answer in the whole survey. The proportion is higher only in questions number: 5 – about the advantages of universities, 6 – disadvantages of universities and 11 – the worst Polish universities. Thus, it is possible to assume that the respondents treated this question as a question about evaluation, as such questions (also question number 4, concerning the

characteristics of a perfect university) display high percentage of lack of response. Is it possible to explain the unwillingness or difficulties in answering questions about desirable or undesirable states?

Who says that? Certain majorities can be identified in case of a few segments of respondents. Taking age into consideration, these are people younger than 17 or older than 59, predominantly from single-person households with independent children, working on farms, pensioners and unemployed, as well as unskilled workers, housewives, but also owners and farmers. What is also characteristic is that these are mainly people not using the Internet, with lowest income who find it hard to satisfy their basic material needs. They have elementary and vocational education, certainly not higher education. Substantial positive deviations can be observed on the groups of inhabitants of: łódzkie, śląskie and zachodniopomorskie voivodeships.

What's interesting is that the following two most frequent categories are directly valuating: „high level of teaching” and “good, very good” - together they constitute a half of the number in the category “don't know/hard to say”. It is also worth pointing here to the manner of evaluation – rather general: high level and very good – this is practically the same.

Counting all categories containing valuation together there are a total of 34,6 % of answers, including 27% positive (high level, good, educate well, prestige/renown, good staff, wisdom and other positive) and negative: 7,6% (impractical, fossilized, low level, under-financed, other negative). Summing up the issues of evaluation, it is worth pointing out that the biggest group are answers that cannot be clearly classified as positive or negative (54), the second biggest group are rather positive answers (32-33%) and only about 14% are negative answers.

In case of this question there is also the highest percentage of rare or isolated answers categorized as “others” - together they constitute over 21% of all given answers and on average almost every third respondent gave such an answer. Thus, adding answers from the category ,others’ and lack of answers, we get: 45% of answers and 66% of respondents, which seems to suggest low conventionality of the image of universities among the surveyed. This diagnosis is confirmed also when we look at a (large) number of categories oscillating between 1 and 2%.

The remaining groups of answers are already (as mentioned above) rare and concentrate on a few major aspects: 1. knowledge/science, 2. tradition and long history vs. modernity, 3. renown and fame, 4. quality (teaching and staff), 5. payment (expensive and free of charge), as well as 6. size and number of students.

What may be the reason for low conventionalization of answers and high percentage of lack of answers? Does it come only from the lack of knowledge – from the lack of contact?

The analysis of data from the perspective of demographic factors doesn't reveal any major deviations, apart from the lack of response analyzed above. There are, however, some small differences: women more often emphasize prestige, good staff and fame of universities. Internet users are more likely to point to the availability of universities and prestige, holders of BA titles emphasize, knowledge/science'. Farmers and unskilled workers, as well as housewives and owners have nothing to say in the greatest number

of categories, most often they talk about (un-) availability and antiquity, as well as about prestige, education and lack of costs – as if they couldn't see such possibility.

Summing up the analysis of answers to this question, it could be said that the general image of universities is rather positive (33%) and unknown (33%) and to only a small extent negative. What also counts as an element of positive image are answers pointing to a generally "high level" and the fact that they are "good", prestigious and have good staff. Negative answers point mostly to the problems with adapting to changing conditions, low level of education and financing. Due to the high percentage of answers pointing to the lack of knowledge about universities, it is advisable to take up communicative actions in order to work out messages and communicate with the highlighted groups of recipients.

Question 4. Perfect university

In response to the question number 4 concerning the characteristics of a perfect university, similarly as in question number 3 (about the characteristics of a typical university) the biggest group are answers of the kind 'don't know / hard to say' – however, here the group of respondents giving such an answer is 10% lower. However, in this (4.) question the group of answers classified as 'others' is 7% higher in relation to the relevant question. Initially, this suggests greater number of more diversified ideas and expectations among respondents and a comparably greater group of such answers than in the question about typical (real) universities. This conclusion, even if not very surprising, bears far-reaching consequences for universities in Poland: much more is expected from them than is known about them. This confirms conclusions from the previous question, that not much is known about the 'university'; ... but at the same time universities are expected to have almost only positive characteristics.

This is associated with at least a few important issues. First of all, people know little about universities. The second thing is that they have their own (as the above table shows), rather individualized ideas. Third thing is that satisfying these expectations is associated with the confirmation of own vision of the world and, as a consequence, the conviction that a university is good. After all, who (among readers) doesn't know what companies or institutions dealing with eg. education should look like or how they should operate? For the surveyed (as we know from question number 2) universities are above all educational institutions. As a consequence, we receive satisfaction from a university, when it functions according to educational rules. There is no need to explain an opposite situation. Thus what is expected from a university and whether these expectations can be satisfied is an essential issue. Here, it is necessary to have knowledge both about the expectations and the possibilities of satisfying these expectations, later, consistent communication, so that people who have contact with universities know what they can (and what they can't) expect, which as a long-term consequence builds this mutual understanding and trust. On the basis of data analysis it is possible to conclude that this aspect is currently slightly neglected.

Table 4. The respondents' answers to the question: what should a perfect university be like?

Perfect university	Answers		Percentage of observations
	N	Percentage	
Don't know	286	15,3%	25,2%
High level	140	7,5%	12,3%
Good staff	142	7,6%	12,5%
Friendly / looking after the student	124	6,6%	10,9%
Practical, work after graduation	123	6,6%	10,8%
Available (for everyone)	114	6,1%	10,0%
Teach well	100	5,4%	8,8%
Free of charge	77	4,1%	6,8%
Well-equipped, facilities, rich	78	4,2%	6,9%
Cheap / scholarships	59	3,2%	5,2%
Modern	53	2,8%	4,7%
Open	45	2,4%	4,0%
Prestige / renown / praised	37	2,0%	3,3%
Good	32	1,7%	2,8%
Many faculties	26	1,4%	2,3%
Tradition	22	1,2%	1,9%
Knowledge	19	1,0%	1,7%
Not for everyone	19	1,0%	1,7%
Demanding	17	0,9%	1,5%
Independent / free of corruption	16	0,9%	1,4%
Big	12	0,6%	1,1%
Organized	12	0,6%	1,1%
Interesting	12	0,6%	1,1%
Others	304	16,3%	26,8%
Total	1869	100,0%	164,7%

Source: Own materials.

The following two responses generally confirm the image from question (3.) about the characteristics of universities: ,lack of answer' and ,high level'.

However, further questions highlight the direction of expectations from universities. Some of them are "new", compared to the question about the characteristics of universities: ,friendly, looking after the student', ,practical', ,well equipped', ,cheap' and ,open', ,independent' and ,organized'. These are the desired traits, which the respondents can't "see" when talking about typical universities.

The second part is a kind of "strengthening" of traits recognized (earlier) as appropriate for typical universities and what's more in this question they are named 2-3 times more often than in the previous one. These differences between the current and the expected state seem to highlight the deficits, or in other words, "desired direction of changes". These traits are: ,good staff', ,available for everyone', ,educate well', ,free of charge', , modern'.

Analyzing further answers it is possible to notice again answers already known from question number 3 – however, here they are given 2-3 times less often than when referring to typical universities. It could

be concluded that these traits point to aspects which according to respondents are in sufficient quantity, or there is no need to repeat them. They concern such characteristics as: ,prestige/renown', ,good', ,tradition', ,knowledge', ,not for everyone', ,big' , thus, these are traits to some extent exclusive (perhaps apart from knowledge) which are hard to attain.

At the same time the analysis of the relation between question 3 and question 4 shows a few associated categories which may suggest a relation between the ideas of a typical university and the expectations, as well as deficits in satisfying these expectations. Among the most important correlations there are: 1) from 30 to 60%: impractical – practical, fossilized – practical, 2) from 25 to 29%: educate – high level, not for everyone - friendly, good staff – well equipped, fossilized – friendly. Lower correlations are regarded as insignificant. Four important automatic correlations between answers to questions 3 and 4 have been observed: ,don't know' 49,5% (69), ,high level' 35% (33,6), ,good staff' 32% (10), tradition 25% (77,3) – the presented figures refer to the percentage of respondents repeating answers from question number 3 in question number 4. At the same time the numbers in brackets present the situation analyzed from another perspective – what percentage of respondents providing an answer to question 4, said it already earlier in question 3. As can be seen, the highest stability in communication about (current and desired) characteristics of universities is displayed by the answers ,tradition' and ,don't know', which seems to be an interesting observation, as especially in case of the first of the analyzed answers it constitutes a visible implementation of the functioning of the mechanism of tradition, which can be paraphrased as follows: what something was like before (good) is and will be good”.

The analysis of data from the perspective of demographic factors doesn't show any major deviations, except for a few categories. The youngest and the oldest group, the lowest personal income, farmers and unskilled workers – more ,don't know' answers. Lower number of ,don't know' answers is usually associated with the highest personal income and the public servant sphere, white collar workers, personnel and owners – as the analysis shows there is a visible connection between knowledge about universities and education. The answer “available” is given more often by people with lower personal income and income per head in a household, people with bachelor degrees and farmers. A perfect university should be ,more caring' for personnel and employees of state-owned companies and again for holders of bachelor degrees.

Question 5. Advantages of universities

Table 5. The respondents' answers to the question: What are the advantages of Polish universities?

Advantages of universities	Answers		Percentage of observations
	N	Percentage	
1 Don't know	390	25,1%	34,4%
2 High level	159	10,2%	14,0%
3 Educate well / educate	146	9,4%	12,9%
4 Staff	107	6,9%	9,4%
5 Available / open	93	6,0%	8,2%
6 Prestige / known / praised	85	5,5%	7,5%
7 Free of charge	76	4,9%	6,7%
8 There are many / choice of faculties	50	3,2%	4,4%
9 Cheap / scholarships	27	1,7%	2,4%
10 Knowledge	21	1,4%	1,9%
11 There are no advantages	18	1,2%	1,6%
12 Polish	18	1,2%	1,6%
13 Cooperation / international student exchange	19	1,2%	1,7%
14 Tradition	17	1,1%	1,5%
15 Friendly / look after the student	14	0,9%	1,2%
16 Students / many students	13	0,8%	1,1%
17 Equipment / facilities	13	0,8%	1,1%
18 Good	12	0,8%	1,1%
19 Modern	10	0,6%	0,9%
20 Big	8	0,5%	0,7%
88 Others	259	16,7%	22,8%
Total	1555	100,0%	137,0%

Source: Own materials.

By assumption, the question about the advantages of universities (Table 5.) had two important functions. The first one is identifying traits that are regarded by the respondents as currently positive. The second, not less important, function was contrasting present advantages with the ideal and later with current traits of typical universities obtained in question number 3 (when the respondents were not asked for valuation).

First, let's analyze what respondents name as advantages of universities. The biggest share in the pool of answers belongs to, similarly as in the previous question (about a perfect university) the 'don't know' category. It constitutes $\frac{1}{4}$ of the total collection of answers and it was given by every third surveyed. To paraphrase it, we could say that only $\frac{2}{3}$ of the population has anything to say about the advantages of universities. Is it a lot or not? If we take into consideration only this research and compare the number of cases of lack of answer, this question places above the average for the whole survey and in the top 5 (analyzing ranks) – however, in this respect it is not exceptional. Those who gave such an answer ('don't know') are above all people older than 59, from one-person households, with personal income lower than PLN 800 per person and below PLN 700 per person in a household, pensioners, farm workers,

as well as unskilled workers and housewives. People not using the Internet, with elementary and vocational education dominate. Thus, these are people who, for educational or financial reasons, had/ have a limited access to universities and don't use a medium such as the Internet.

Following advantages of universities concern good education on a high level (answers ,high level', ,educate well'), here, the analysis of socio-demographic factors reveals no significant differences – thus it can be assumed that this is a rather common and stable conviction. Only the employees of the public sector are less likely to talk about the aspect of good education , however, this could be a random irregularity.

Another advantage of Polish universities, according to the surveyed, is their staff, or in other words people (co-) responsible for the previously mentioned ,high level' and ,good education'. Also, the category of answers ,good', which placed at the bottom of the table, was recognized as functionally associated with ,staff'. When we sum up the answers mentioned just a moment earlier, as a big group they constitute a total of 27.3% of the collection of answers to this question.

Another big group are answers pointing to a broadly understood availability of universities:

“available/open”, “free of charge/cheap”, “there are many of them” - in total 12.6% of answers.

The last group of answers which exceeds the level of 2% of respondents concerns the ,prestige' of universities. Here, there are no significant differences between groups of respondents, except for farmers and housewives, who didn't give any answer from this category.

Analyzing the differences between the advantages and the perfect state, that is, how much of the idea of perfection has materialized as an advantage, several correlations can be observed:

- 68% of people who didn't know what a perfect university should be like, don't know any advantages either,
- 41% of people who earlier claimed that a perfect university should be characterized by high level, recognized high level as an advantage of Polish universities
- 28% of people who claimed that good education is an element of perfection, don't know any advantages
- 20% of people who named ,good staff' as a trait of a perfect university, name ,good staff' as an advantage
- 20% of people who named ,good staff' as a trait of a perfect university, name ,high level' as an advantage.

Differences and correlations between recognition of advantages and the current state:

- 63% of people who didn't know typical traits of Polish universities didn't name advantages either. The analysis of the correlations between questions 3, 4 and 5 showed that there was a constant group of 153 people who gave a ,don't know' answer to all three questions.
- 46% of the surveyed who described typical universities as characterized by high level, give this answer also as a trait and 20% give also staff as an advantage,
- 36 % of people who think that a typical university is accessible, name accessibility also as an advantage,

- 32% of respondents who think that a typical university is prestigious, mention high level as an advantage,
- out of people who think that typical universities have good staff, 40% recognize staff and 35% recognize high level as advantages of Polish universities.

Summing up this part of the analysis, it is worth stressing the fact that the assumed correlation between 'high level' and 'staff' has been confirmed in the answers of some of the respondents.

Question 6. What in your opinion are the disadvantages of Polish universities?

Analysis of the set of categories obtained on the basis of answers of respondents to question 6. "What in your opinion are the disadvantages of Polish universities?" again reveals a major share of the category 'don't know', which in this case reaches almost 45% of the surveyed. If we add to this category answers from the categories 'lack of answer' and 'they have no disadvantages', it turns out that over a half (54,4%) of respondents don't provide any disadvantages of universities. Thus, this is the question with the third (or second, if we take into consideration also 'lack of answer' and 'they have no disadvantages') highest number of 'don't know' answers in the whole survey. More answers of the 'don't know' kind appear only in case of the question about "the worst universities in Poland". The above table may suggest that the surveyed are least eager to talk about the negative traits of universities, as if they followed a rule that you don't talk about the negative/bad issues or as if they didn't know any disadvantages.

It is also worth taking a look at the number of answers in the 'others' category, which is rather low, because it constitutes just over 5% of the collection of answers and 7% of respondents, which is well below the average for all questions. Thus, it can be assumed that the respondents either didn't answer the question or answered in a rather (but not very) conventionalized way – answers pointing to individual differences are rare.

Let's now analyze what the respondents name as disadvantages.

The most important group of answers points to the financial aspect: universities are perceived as 'expensive' or even focused on just the rich people. Similar in character are answers suggesting insufficient social assistance. Altogether, these answers constitute 11% of answers and were given by 14% of the surveyed.

The second group of answers points to impracticality, lack of adaptation to current reality and difficulties in finding work after graduation – such answers were given by a total of 10% of the surveyed and adding 'fossilized' – by over 13%.

Further disadvantages, according to the surveyed: 'hard to get accepted', 'overcrowded', 'there are too few' and that they are located 'only in big cities' and lack of some areas of study – sum up to a total of 13% of respondents. The remaining two groups of answers concentrate on the deficiencies in equipment, financing (7%) and organizational deficiencies, fossilized character and bureaucracy (6,6%).

Table 6. The respondents' answers to the question.

What are the disadvantages of Polish universities?	Answers		Percentage of observations
	N	Percentage	
Don't know, hard to say	508	35,7%	44,8%
Expensive, fees, for the rich	150	10,5%	13,2%
They have no disadvantages	97	6,8%	8,5%
Impractical, maladjusted	68	4,8%	6,0%
Hard to find work	45	3,2%	4,0%
Insufficient equipment and facilities	47	3,3%	4,1%
Hard to get accepted, unavailable	48	3,4%	4,2%
Overcrowded, too few places	48	3,4%	4,2%
Low level	48	3,4%	4,2%
Lack of money, financing	40	2,8%	3,5%
Organization and bureaucracy	40	2,8%	3,5%
Fossilized, closed	37	2,6%	3,3%
Staff	30	2,1%	2,6%
Corruption, nepotism	21	1,5%	1,9%
Attitude to students	22	1,5%	1,9%
Gaps in the offer of areas of study	21	1,5%	1,9%
There are too few	22	1,5%	1,9%
Only in big cities	13	0,9%	1,1%
Social aid too small	13	0,9%	1,1%
Hard, demand a lot	12	0,8%	1,1%
Others	81	5,7%	7,1%
Lack of answer	12	0,8%	1,1%
Total	1423	100,0%	125,4%

Source: Own materials.

The above mentioned five big groups of answers cover almost all disadvantages of universities obtained in this question. It is possible to (greatly) boil down all these disadvantages to the following sentence: „Not only are universities only for the rich, but they are also poor, poorly equipped and organized and people graduating from Polish universities can't find work“. This is quite an interesting image, which presents an institution, which despite serving the richer part of the society, can't cope with its own, often bureaucratic and anachronistic internal issues, which makes them maladjusted to the contemporary reality. However, the institution is still desirable.

Thus, on the one hand we can see unsatisfied social expectations and possibilities of participation, on the other hand there are substantial-practical and organizational deficiencies.

The answer ‚don't know' is more often given by people not using the Internet, with elementary and vocational education living in the countryside and older than 40, with personal income lower than PLN 800, as well as pensioners, farmers, unskilled workers and housewives, as well as people with self-sufficient children.

The issues of limited access caused by financial factors are raised more often by the inhabitants of small towns (less than 50,000 people). Maladjustment and impracticality is highlighted by young people aged 18-24 and Internet users, as well as people from households, where according to respondents there is enough money for everything. Married couples and couples without children tend to describe universities as 'overcrowded' and 'plagued by bureaucracy/bad organization'. Even though rather understandable, it is also alarming that such disadvantages as 'bureaucracy', 'fossilized', 'staff' are more often mentioned by people with higher education. This leads to a conclusion that they know about these disadvantages from their own experiences. The above statement can be generalized to cover many disadvantages of universities: they are mentioned more often by those who can know them from personal experience, which is alarming, as it suggests the existence of real problems perceived by people and not just unconfirmed opinions present in the society.

Looking at the correlation between disadvantages (6.) and the perfect state (5.) the biggest groups of correlation of answers were distinguished:

- 222 people or 19% of all respondents answer 'don't know' to both questions
- 75% of those who didn't say what should a perfect university be like, didn't name any disadvantages either
- 36% of the surveyed who recognized 'high level' as a trait of an ideal university don't name any disadvantages and 13% claim there are 'no disadvantages' – together it is a half of this group,
- 27-29% of people who recognize good staff and friendly attitude towards the student as desirable characteristics – don't name any disadvantages
- at the same time, among those who think that availability for everyone, cheapness and being free of charge are desirable traits 31- 38% don't name any disadvantages, but 24% - 30% claim that one of the disadvantages of universities is that they are available only for the rich.

Analyzing the correlations between questions about disadvantages and the current state, consistency of the group of people answering 'don't know' at the level of 70% was observed. Except for this, no special differences were observed, only consistency in emphasizing rather negative traits regarded as typical (impractical, crowded, not for everyone) also in the question about disadvantages.

Question 7. What do Polish universities give the society?

In course of the initial analysis of the table, it is worth paying attention to the number of categories in the table, which is lower than in the previous tables and on average they are more numerous. At the top of the table there are two equally numerous categories (24,6% of respondents each), they both concern education and training one concerns people directly ('educated people') other more generally concerns education. However, as universities can educate only (mainly?) people, both categories seem to be convergent in this aspect. However, one of them points to the aspect of effect "educated people", the second one points to the process and the possibility of taking part in the process.

Another quite numerous category (25%) of respondents points to 'human resources, specialists' (15,6%)

as the “society’s gain” from universities, but also points to the effects of education, this time with reference to the labour market. Two other categories, namely: ,unemployed’ (4,8%) and ,work’ (4,6%) also refer to the labour market. Here it is worth pointing out that 20,2% (15,6+4,6) of the surveyed have a positive attitude to this aspect, and four times fewer surveyed display a negative attitude (,unemployed’ - 4,8%).

Another group of answers concerns the ,advances, progress’, new possibilities, future and development to a higher level (,progress, discoveries’, ,possibilities, future’). Categories in this group put together were given by 10.8% of respondents.

It seems that the surveyed also point to the scientific aspect of universities, when they say that universities provide the society with ,scientists’ (4,8) and ,science’ (3.5%). It is unclear here how the answers pointing to ,holders of master’s titles and engineers’ and thus graduates of universities should be classified. They are not scientists, even though theoretically, from this moment they can choose such a path of development. It is also not entirely clear how answers concerning ,knowledge’ should be interpreted (8,3%). Should they be included in the category of progress of knowledge, development of science, etc or rather in the didactic category as a possibility of gaining knowledge, not necessarily latest knowledge, but stabilized and tested knowledge (as answers to the previous questions suggest).

The last, quite numerous group of answers are suggestions that universities provide ,knowledgeable people’ (4,3) as well as ,intellectuals, elites’ of the society (2,6). These answers are discussed separately from the answers concerning education or staff, as it seems, they point to a completely different kind of formation – this is not about knowledge, especially understood as books and rules, but rather about a certain trained ability to take a broader view of reality and solve problems in a more creative ways than foreseen by “standard” solutions.

Looking at further, less numerous categories it is worth noticing that they point to certain non-material goods (prestige, culture), as well as material goods (money) and values providing possibilities of cooperation and development (contacts).

The number of answers of the ,others’ kind is at the survey’s average level. At the same time the number of cases of ,lack of answer’ (7,3) even together with the answer ,nothing’ (1,9) is well below the average for all questions.

Summing up the above analyses, it is necessary to pay attention to a few aspects. First one of them is the set of answers arranged according to whether they concern the aspect of didactics/education 68,6% of the surveyed (24,6+24,6+15,6+4,8,unemployed’) or whether they concern science/development 19,1% of the surveyed (10,8+8,3). The status of ,knowledge’ is unclear, nevertheless, no matter how we classify it, there is an apparent dominance of didactic components in what universities “give the society”.

Table 7. Answers of the respondents to the question: What do Polish universities give the society?

What do Polish universities give the society?	Answers		Observations
	Number	Percentage	Percentage
1 Educated people	279	17,4%	24,6%
2 Education / training	279	17,4%	24,6%
3 Human resources, specialists	177	11,0%	15,6%
4 Knowledge	133	8,3%	11,7%
5 Progress, discoveries,	84	5,2%	7,4%
6 Scientists	55	3,4%	4,8%
7 Unemployed	55	3,4%	4,8%
8 Work	52	3,2%	4,6%
9 Knowledgeable people	49	3,1%	4,3%
10 Science	40	2,5%	3,5%
11 Titles: master's degrees, engineer	36	2,2%	3,2%
12 Elites and intellectuals	29	1,8%	2,6%
13 Nothing	21	1,3%	1,9%
14 Higher level	21	1,3%	1,9%
15 Possibilities, future	17	1,1%	1,5%
16 Prestige, renown	15	0,9%	1,3%
17 Culture	15	0,9%	1,3%
18 Money	9	0,6%	0,8%
19 Contacts	9	0,6%	0,8%
66 Other negative	23	1,4%	2,0%
88 Other	121	7,6%	10,7%
99 Lack of answer / don't know	83	5,2%	7,3%
Total	1602	100,0%	141,1%

Source: Own materials.

Conclusion

Summing up the results achieved by the survey, it is worth paying attention to a few most significant observations and conclusions.

First one of them points to a significant number of cases of lack of answer, which may have been caused both by shortages of knowledge about universities (in case of some questions) as well as the dominant norms of discourse – which require “not saying any bad things” about universities (so people prefer to say nothing at all). The second, which is in a way supplementary, highlights clear expectations of social utilitarian value of universities expressed in: education understood as general and specialist education, preparing specialists for work, development of knowledge and progress.

The distinguishing characteristics of the best Polish universities are also clear – the surveyed name tradition, high level, the fact that they are well known, old, prestigious/renowned and have good staff. Also the idea of a perfect university contains expectations of high level and good staff and what's very important, they are expected to be friendly and practical. The last two aspects are what's missing from the opinions of the surveyed about typical Polish universities, as universities satisfy more or less most of the other expectations defining good universities. Asked about the disadvantages of universities,

the surveyed also name the fact that it is necessary to pay tuition fees and that they are available mainly for the wealthy people.

It seems that in the current situation Polish universities should take measures of at least two kinds. The first one is working out a general strategy of communication about universities as a whole – it is advisable to work out such a document on the level of (a conference?) provosts of all Polish universities. The second, more individual type is preparation of communication strategies by particular, less known units. Preparing these two kinds of documents and the associated strategic actions should in the long term prevent the erosion of the trust in universities as institutions and reduction of (already small) possibilities of active participation in constant evolution of the society. However, the development of this scenario is not predetermined and requires further, consistent research.

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