

The Role of Universities in Shaping Social Attitudes of Future Managers

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*Why did I take
bad things for good ones
and what would it take
to keep me from doing it again?
Wisława Szymborska, List*

| Abstract

Purpose

The article is devoted to critical reflection on the present model of ethical education of managers in Poland. It attempts to outline a model that could be adopted to meet the current challenges of social change.

| Design

The first part of the article is written from a philosophical perspective, which brings to mind the Greek Paideia. The second part is an attempt to analyze the imperfect Polish educational reality concerning the formation of future managers' attitudes.

| Findings

The author's arguments focus on the proposal to transform the “educational” teaching system of ethics into a “social interaction” one.

| Originality

In the summary, the author presents specific actions to be taken at Polish universities so they can quickly move from the traditional model of managers' education to a modern pro-social model of education based on social interaction.

Keywords: education managers, ethical education, pro-social education, Greek education.

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| Introduction

The first part of this article has been written from a philosophical perspective, which brings to mind the Greek Paideia. The second part attempts to analyze the imperfect Polish educational reality concerning the formation of future managers' attitudes. The author's arguments focus on the proposal to transform the "educational" teaching system of ethics into a "social interaction" one.

Few people today (even from the business world) openly deny the importance and relevance of ethics in economic life. However, the reality that surrounds us with all its socio-economic problems very clearly demonstrates that the role ethics plays in shaping modern business is not all that obvious for a multitude of businesses and business representatives in today's world. The recent crisis exposed some of the internal weaknesses of the free market system, and also demonstrated that the role of ethics in business practice, both in its institutional and individual dimensions, has long been underestimated. In this situation it becomes necessary, especially in the academic environment, to reflect not only on the causes of this state of affairs, but mainly on what our environment should do. Business ethics up to this day has been merely tolerated at many Polish universities, and regarded as a life-complicating extra by practitioners. It needs to become an inherent part of economic education first, and then of business. We ought to reflect on what to do to so that Adam Mickiewicz's observation that "one of the reasons hampering the mass education of our people is neglecting the cultivation of moral philosophy" (1950, v. 5: 125) no longer rings true. However, this is not the time for a philosophical discussion about human nature, but for reflection on the role that education can play in shaping young people, and business people specifically.

This specific research is underpinned by a strong assumption that human behaviour can be shaped through the educational process. If the opposite was assumed, namely that the condition of man is influenced merely by nature (e.g. innate selfish tendencies that all humans are born with), or by only the specific predispositions of individuals, further research would be somewhat less useful. To reflect on the reasons why Polish managers do not receive a fuller education, one would have to answer the questions of whether the insufficient presence of ethics in business

practice is the result of the previous (historical) elimination of ethical principles from the area of economic theory (Filek 2002); or whether it is inherently more difficult for future managers to grasp ethical issues; or whether they are insufficiently or improperly educated by business ethicists, as well as by the whole society.

Considering the theme of our conference, I shall mainly discuss the last question. However as experience has shown, the reasons for this state of affairs can also be found in two other factors mentioned above. This is because mainstream economic theory and practitioners still shun ethics, and future managers who are busy gaining experience required by most employers and solving their everyday problems, do not have enough time for additional reflection on ethics, and, even more so, for moral education. Nevertheless as Fichte said, “man can do what he should, and if he says he cannot, it means he does not want to.”

When analysing the weaknesses of education as one of the factors contributing to the lack of the expected morality level among Polish managers, it is first worth to note from the educational perspective, ethics (as an academic subject) is not the easiest one to present or explain. Second, ethics in itself as a specific academic subject is rather difficult to “sell” in the educational dimension (although this market has been significantly commercialised in recent years). This is because ethics is not associated with any significant and measurable skills, especially when employers often do not look for graduates with a distinct and formed ethical attitude, but rather for those who are flexible (adapting easily to the requirements of a given situation). This certainly does not raise the level of ethical education, which in its nature, must focus on some values, if not universal then at least sustainable.

It should also be noted that courses in ethics are not just about passing on the latest knowledge, as is the case with many other subjects taught. Business ethics classes are not meant to merely provide the opportunity to transfer a set of core information on the subject. They are also supposed to stimulate the students’ own reflections. As Karl Jaspers rightly observed (referring to Socrates’ thoughts) when it comes to the understanding of ethics, “everyone must achieve it by themselves, it cannot be passed on as a commodity – it can only be awoken” (Jaspers 2000: 10). Therefore, the process of teaching business ethics differs significantly from education based purely on information transfer, as it must contain the element of “Socratic awakening.”

Teaching of business ethics is a complex venture due to the difficulty arising from the need to maintain (to use the Aristotelian term) the proper balance between ethical radicalism/fundamentalism (understood as imposing very high ethical requirements) and ethical arbitrariness and indulgence. The latter involves the blurring of ethical principles when reaching economic goals that are more important for business practitioners. In the business ethics educational context, the first case involves the “too radical” opinions of some teachers, often expressed *ex cathedra* and with no convincing argument. These usually discourage students and future managers in advance to act in accordance with these principles. This is because in their view the rigorous requirements represent an additional, and, from the economic perspective, even excessive and

not always justified effort and additional costs. In the second case, ethics wanes in favour of the essential aim of business activity (economic effects) and becomes at most, an additional marketing feature rather than an activity that is necessary in business operations. In the above scenario, reaching the economic goals will always justify the departure from ethical principles valid in the society.

This difficulty derives from numerous disputes on different approaches to ethics; therefore, it derives in some sense from the problems of ethics itself as a field of thought. One of the most significant disputes concerns the differences in approach between ethics based on the principle of universalization (derived from Kant's thoughts) and ethics based on the personal dimension of morality (a good exemplification of which seems to be Alasdair MacIntyre's virtue ethics (1996)). Internal disputes, otherwise positive in the development of ethical theory, unfortunately impede keeping the proper Aristotelian balance during the educational process. Furthermore, this additional internal difficulty associated with the transition from theory to practice has been identified in the development of applied ethics. We are therefore faced with the situation when it is said that:

On one hand it became fashionable – usually without deeper theoretical and philosophical ambitions, though undoubtedly in the manner important in the practice of social life – to debate applied ethics, mainly represented by bioethics, social ethics, business ethics, environmental ethics, and even the ethics of peace (Kaniowski 1999: 6).

On the other hand, there are “pure ethicists” who consider applied ethics to be a threat to ethics in its general sense, as it introduces the issue of own-interest (particularly business ethics), an idea alien in ethics that was founded on selflessness. Additionally in the sphere of theoretical reflection, there exists a dispute on the approach to ethics between ethics based on the personal dimension of morality and the one based on the principle of universalization. Finally considering the latter only, there is on-going discussion about finding the universal principle between the supporters of basing it either on discourse (Habermas 1998), or on justice (Rawls 2009), or on use (utilitarians), or on contract and the idea of responsibility (Jonas 1996; Filek 1996).

Therefore, taking everything into consideration, the author believes that perhaps our teaching option should essentially be changed from the currently prevailing ethical one (based on knowledge transfer and ethical reasoning) to an explicitly social one (some authors call it pro-social), with moral education being one of its components. Furthermore, it seems essential that the interdisciplinary education option, which introduces greater coherence between economics, sociology and philosophy, be expanded. The teaching of each of these three disciplines should contribute to the better understanding of the other two.

During the last debate entitled “The Implementation of the Economic and Social Objectives in Business: Harmony or Conflict” that took place at the Cracow University of Economics during a conference on “The Phenomenon of Help in Socio-Economic Life” (November, 2011), one of the

discussion participants stated that “business is always social.” Some of the debaters opposed this (mainly because of the word “always”), especially that the actions of many companies demonstrate a lack of sensitivity to ethical or environmental issues, and social issues even more so. However, what the author of that statement had in mind was an old and still widespread belief in the business world about the liberal roots of business. It is social by definition as it provides consumers (or citizens) with the products necessary to live and with useful services. Consequently, in countries with advanced market economies, citizens enjoy a more comfortable and safe lifestyle. This is the evidence of the social dimension of economic activity. In short, the economist represented the view that the possibility of purchasing goods and services produced by market participants exhausted the social dimension of business.

If we consider the social impact of business in this sense, and according to representatives of some business environments, there is no need for additional integration of social aspects within business, because everything that is happening in the market represents a social dimension of business itself. In this context, it seems quite difficult to teach and educate future managers, since it is not only the representatives of the business world that forget about the social obligations of business entities. It is also the economists that do not recognise the importance of this aspect, or simply reduce it to producing goods and delivering services. Such an approach to the social dimension of economic activity is underpinned by the conviction of the legitimacy of the liberal position, and also its eternal universality, where no regard is given to changes happening in the political and socio-economic reality that surrounds us. The educational process founded on this belief is (in simple terms) reduced to economic education with the socio-moral aspects absent. Consequently, economics is taught independent of sociological and philosophical analysis.

Due to the dominant model in our country’s economic education, where the social attitudes of future managers are formed only insofar as to create new products and new services, the education of future managers should be complemented by social education to increase students’ awareness about the new social role of business. This education should focus on the transfer of economic knowledge, and also on presenting students with a new dimension of corporate social activity. This should include the ways to involve company actions in building a stable and sustainably developing society, as per the European Union guidelines. One of the essential elements of such a model of education would be to educate managers as enlightened citizens who understand economic processes and social phenomena, as well as that a high level of ethics among members of society is a requirement for a stable society.

However, it cannot be forgotten that in Poland we have to deal with an aversion to social actions that is difficult to overcome, as such actions were rather repressed in the socialist economy. We also have to remember about the individualistic roots of our culture, as demonstrated by the *liberum veto* principle evident in our history. There is also the reluctance of Poles to direct imposition and enforcement of law (due to many decades of law being imposed by an invader or occupier). Taking all of this into account, every effort should be made to ensure that such education is voluntary in the broadest possible way.

| **The role of ethics and ethical education in the public sphere – philosophical perspective**

The role of ethics in the education of citizens was discussed by Plato and Aristotle. The first philosopher presented the issue of educating society members to be good citizens in accordance with the natural predispositions of humans. It is worth noting that the starting point for the philosopher's reflection was the issue of educating the educators. Plato deliberated on how to prepare future society leaders and protect them from misguidance or other forms of external threat, so that they themselves do not become the greatest threat to their own society. In the Platonic metaphor, the problem was what to do in order for the herding dogs, whose role it is to serve their community and protect their herds, not to become "sheep-biting" wolves dangerous to every citizen as an "effect of impunity and wantonness, or from starvation, or under the influence of some other bad habit" (Plato 1948, 416 ab).

Quite ironically, using the lessons of Plato and the experience of the past two centuries, one might reasonably ask today how to educate those whose actions speak of serving the public and those who shape the society's prosperity. One must ensure that their actions not become a threat to the members of the public as an effect of impunity and wantonness, or from the lust of possession, or under the influence of some other bad habit. So the underlying question is how to teach and educate future managers (who in a broad sense, will "rule the world") so that they do not benefit from the misery of their fellow citizens by employing unfair practices (such as producing and selling expired food products or harmful drugs). This question includes how to train them so that their actions do not cause environmental harm (as is the case especially with the mining industry, and in particular the one operating in the less developed countries); so that their activities do not contribute to the increase in the numbers of ailing employees (whose safety has not been ensured for economic reasons); and so that their neglect does not lead to tragic disasters (as in Bhopal or in the Gulf of Mexico).

As observed by Jaeger, according to *paideia* (the Greek concept of education), "the life of every individual finds its essence, its reason and its limits in a function of the individual as a member of society, which in itself is a living organism" (Jaeger 1964, v. 2: 285). Therefore, the highest value to be sought is the unity of society. As Plato writes, "we did not found the state so that a particular group of people could be happy, but in order for the whole society to be happy as far as it is possible" (Plato 1948, 420 b). Wise education alongside wise rule is the path to social unity. Consequently according to this concept, the main goal of the state, and so the goal in itself, must not be power or economic prosperity or accumulation of wealth. These can merely become the means for achieving the fundamental objective, which is the unity and stability of the *polis*. Therefore, the aim of education should be to shape young people in such a way to ensure they will guarantee this unity and stability in the future, which has nothing to do with education for a socialist society (Filek 2001). As a result, such education must not only focus on developing narrow professional skills, but also on high moral and social skills, or social competencies.

It seems impossible to simply transfer Plato's recommendations to the present time (i.e. training for the role of artisans, guardians and philosophers) just for the vast differences in socio-economic practices, and also the advanced globalisation processes, different political situation, and the changeability of the surrounding world, unknown to the Greeks. However, the Platonic doctrine of the role of education in shaping social cohesion remains valid. As Isocrates noted: "It is the education of the youth that will decide the fate of the state" (quote in *Skrzydlate Słowa*, 2007). In Poland, this statement of Chancellor of the Crown Jan Zamojski is widely known: "Such will be the Republics as the upbringing of their youth" (quote in *Skrzydlate Słowa*, 2007).

Similarly, Aristotle also devoted much attention to education. In the 8th book of *Politics*, he wrote "none will doubt that the legislator should direct his attention above all to the education of youth. (...) The neglect of education does harm to the constitution, as the citizen should be moulded to suit the form of government under which they live" (Aristotle 2001, 1337a). All skills and artistry require advance training and preparation so that they can be practically applied. This is also needed to practise virtue. Like in Plato's work, the principal aim of education is to serve the wellbeing of the society, or the *polis* in particular. Therefore, there must only be one common education because as the Stagirite notes, "the training in things which are of common interest should be the same for all." The main purpose of education is therefore to prepare us to live in a community.

Aristotle was aware that being a good citizen in an evil political system can lead to educating citizens who are in favour of this evil system, and does not always equal being a good man (Aristotle 1996, 1130 b). Consequently, being more practical than Plato, Aristotle proposed the kind of ethics that is most conducive to reaching both the common and the individual goals. This was the ethics of moderation that should be exercised by all who actively participate in public life, and that the youth should learn how to practise through appropriate education. Today, a continuation of this approach can be visible in the idea of sustainable development that is important from a business ethics perspective. In socio-economic terms, moderation has been replaced by sustainability (see Laszlo 2008). The idea of sustainable development has, of course, a dimension broader than just the ethical one. However, this is because the idea combines a range of ethical, economic, ecological and social perspectives, which demonstrates the awareness of its creators and supporters of the complexity of social phenomena.

Greek philosophers very strongly emphasised the need to educate young people to be good citizens, as they believed that the welfare of the community (its safety and stability) must take precedence over the welfare of individuals who form it. However at the same time, they recognised the right of every citizen to satisfy their own needs, and as Socrates claimed, even the right to one's own way. This approach was based on the assumption that the welfare of the community creates conditions that are opportune and favourable to individual developmental needs being satisfied. Another feature of this reflection was the belief that instruction through ethics is an important element of social education. This means that apart from learning what law and order is, young people also develop ethical awareness and commit to some of the most important moral values

such as justice, truthfulness and honesty. From the socio-ethical perspective, it was about such a model of education that would make young people aware of their obligations towards the community. Nowadays, a continuation of this approach in the education of managers can be seen in the idea of corporate social responsibility. The obligations and commitments proposed in this idea are supposed to counterbalance the dominance of the entitlements of businesses (Filek 2010b).

It is not very difficult to observe that for the Greek thinkers, education in the spirit of ethical principles was equivalent to social education. “One who becomes a righteous man, becomes a righteous citizen” (Jaspers 2000: 8). The purpose of outlining Plato and Aristotle’s beliefs was not an attempt to prove the superiority of that system, mainly due to the differences between our reality and the Greek one. Rather. It was to deepen the understanding of the concept of social education in contrast to the forms of education that ignore social goals.

| **Role of education in shaping the pro-social (civic) attitudes of economists**

One of the institutions established long ago to educate and train young people was the university. Nowadays however, we are witnessing a dispute about whether in a globalised world of higher education, the university has to teach only (just transfer knowledge) or also has to shape attitudes, to educate in a broad sense. If we support those who credit universities with the educational role, we should reflect on what we wish this education to be. The easiest and safest thing to do (due to the risk of allegations of ideologising the problem) will be to once again refer to the Greek thought, where the educational process was aimed at raising a good citizen. If one accepts this thesis, it is impossible not to agree with another result there from, namely that good education is social, or as some say, pro-social education.

However, we ought to consider how this pro-social education of economists and future managers at the university level might be understood. It appears that it can be understood in several ways such as:

1. Transmitting reliable knowledge about the society that will enable economic college graduates, or graduates majoring in economics, to understand the phenomena occurring in the society, with particular emphasis on the relationship between the economy and other elements of social structure. Hence there is an important role for general and interdisciplinary education, which in turn requires more and more knowledge from business ethics teachers, and also from lecturers in other subjects.
2. Training graduates to realise what the consequences of economic activities are, in particular the negative ones, and training them to minimise them.
3. Allowing graduates to develop such skills that would, when properly applied, benefit both businesses and society as a whole.

4. Promoting a civic engagement attitude, which involves the contribution of skills, knowledge etc. that serve harmonious social development. As Adam Węgrzecki writes, the emphasis of academic education should rest “in the formation of appropriate attitudes and motivation to transfer certain assets onto the community” (2004: 10). Therefore, it is not about transferring material assets, but rather the transfer of the human assets behind economic activity. It is a question of using the economic potential in the context of positive freedom. Taking this approach into consideration, one arrives at the idea of corporate social responsibility understood as the responsibility for the good that can be created by the business world (Filek 2010b).

Social education of young people in any of these aspects is not easy, as the dominant model of education in Polish schools is one that focused students on achieving personal success and on narrow professionalism. This is undoubtedly related to the difficulty in overcoming the reluctance to social action (so much repressed in the socialist economy). Specifically to the desire of Polish people, and finally after many centuries of servitude, it relates to beginning to think about personal success, and not only about “sacrificing one’s life” on the altar of the freedom of motherland, generation after generation. It was especially the last period of material goods shortages and limited freedom that triggered the Poles’ desire to quickly satisfy their needs. This was immediately picked up by the young generation and especially by economics students (the future managers) with their eyes fixed on the fortunes of their peers in developed countries. The current model of education, which is not supplemented with pro-social values, usually leads to minimal thinking about studies and professional work in terms of social tasks that require the student, and later the manager, to test their usefulness to others (if not to the whole society, or even to the local community) (Adamska-Chudzińska, Lorenowicz 2004: 5). As a result, “a typical economics student understands A. Smith’s concept of the ‘invisible hand’ in a simple way: ‘I will only care about myself; the invisible hand of the market will ensure that my actions are beneficial to the society’” (Więckowski 2011: 133).

Moreover, in the educational process designed for economists, and therefore future managers, Polish curricula are dominated by purely economic subjects, most often focusing on using quantitative methods. This allows graduates to acquire skills such as proper estimation of investment risk, labour costs, or usefulness of a marketing campaign, but does not present the socio-ethical perspective. Such a model also lacks the openness to interdisciplinary teaching, which makes it difficult for graduates to observe and understand the phenomena of social changes resulting from economic activity. Consequently, they are unable to estimate the negative social costs of that activity. It is impossible not to note that excessive economisation and segmentation of knowledge reduces students’ sensitivity to social aspects.

Therefore, there appears to be a new challenge for business ethics teachers, which is to “broaden the educational activities to allow for shaping social attitudes, including sensitivity to social values and honesty in obeying them” (Adamska-Chudzińska, Lorenowicz 2004: 6).

This challenging task ought to be achieved by:

1. Academic teachers campaigning at their own academic institutions for significantly stronger university education that is more general and interdisciplinary to the utmost, in the place of narrowly profiled specialised training (at least at the postgraduate level);
2. Continuing to show fellow economists and students that business activity is an activity that happens in the community, and to oppose any attempt to consider this activity separately (as understood by P. Pratley (1998)) from other forms of social activity;
3. Accurate choice of class topics that involve presentation of the social consequences of business activities, preferably through case studies analysis;
4. Increasing students' awareness of the social and ethical dimensions of business and what they and the entire economy owe to the public;
5. Increasing students' personal involvement in social projects (e.g. promoting social actions at universities).

What seems to be most significant in this social approach to education is that graduates will be able to acquire the skill to consider, in the future, all reasonably foreseeable consequences of their business activities, both economic and social. The issue is thus to free them from the illusion that it is sufficient to merely pursue economic goals and the rest "will be done by itself", as in the previously quoted belief that "the market will do the rest." At universities, we must therefore prepare the ranks of future managers in such a way that they will, in the future, become intelligent enough to discover a good business opportunity (i.e. to estimate the risk of starting an economic activity like opening a business in a developing country). They also need to foresee the social consequences of their activities, and thus the risk of social loss that involves things like environmental harm. Moreover, future managers should be able to differentiate between two types of negative consequences, namely those that do not destroy the social fabric, and those that do destroy it. The latter case generates more difficult social problems, and at the same time in a feedback loop, creates additional problems for the economy.

In order to achieve this educational model to shape the attitudes of future entrepreneurs, we ought to move from an explicitly ethical education to social education. In this process, ethics should take the form of social rules. It should be a means to an end rather than the goal in itself. The purpose of instruction based on educating for social life should be the integration of young managers within the society by abolishing the myth that economic activity is completely individualistic. We should be able to make our students, and future managers, become aware that the previously highly emphasised individualistic actions of the baker, the brewer and the butcher (Smith 1954) based on their own interests are no longer sufficient and that the economic period of "baking and brewing" is over. Unfortunately, the market will not do everything for us. We should be able to convince students that today's societies do not search for managers to run some larger or smaller companies, but rather for community leaders who, just like philosophers in Plato's thoughts, will become the guardians of social stability. The only difference is that for

today's entrepreneurs to take on this leadership role in society, they must be able to understand the economic and social conditions, and also to communicate with those who they lead and begin to be responsible for (in a social sense).

In order to achieve such specific objectives, education cannot be “a random process triggered by those who know in the minds of those who do not, but an element that causes individuals to jointly search for the truth and obtain self-knowledge” as described by Socrates (Jaspers 2004: 7). Hence, the role of dialogue as an educational method and the usefulness of case study analysis, where it is possible to exchange views without imposing only one right and overbearing opinion, are most important. Just like Socrates who did not establish any school of philosophy, a business ethicist should not seek to choose only one ethical option as the only selection criterion. The role of the business ethics teacher ought to be outlining the problem/dilemma and the possible solutions to it, while at the same time providing arguments that present the socio-ethical perspectives and show the economic costs of adopting or not adopting solutions.

| **Educating economists in line with the challenges of modernity, and the National Qualifications Framework**

To better prepare for the challenges of the 21st century, and due to inclusion in the Bologna process and the rapid (5-fold) increase in student numbers, Polish higher education is undoubtedly faced with a very difficult task, namely how to “reform itself” to meet the needs of a developing society and the European Union (EU) requirements.

As per the EU requirements, the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) should be introduced in Poland. The only problem is that it requires enormous fortitude, intelligence, lots of available time, and to use Socrates' words “a Delian diver”, to understand what this Framework is and how to implement it.

NQF is supposed to take effect at the beginning of the academic year 2012/2013, and its implementation will be the requirement of the Polish Accreditation Committee and various other committees and accreditation agencies. NQF focuses on learning outcomes that are considered in terms of knowledge, skills and social competencies in eight separate areas of education. Certainly from a business ethics education point of view, the description of learning outcomes in social sciences including economics, management or finance degrees is most interesting. It is true even more as the experts working on the project prepared a description of a graduate with these degrees as “a person who actively works within a group (community), i.e. who has the relevant knowledge, skills and competencies to play this active role, and therefore, alongside ‘self-education’ and ‘self-improvement’, focuses mostly on public activity (although on a different scale and at different levels of social structures” (*University curriculum autonomy. Qualifications framework for higher education*, 2011: 34).

Consequently, according to the experts, universities have (as long as the relevant requirements are satisfied) the freedom to shape their curricula. However, they will be responsible for meeting the learning outcomes, and more specifically, for the compliance of university documents with the master learning outcomes. Leaving the difficulties and uncertainties related to the implementation of the NQF aside, it is worth noting that the social competencies criteria introduced by the NQF provide a larger opportunity to introduce new subjects to curricula. These might include economy ethics, business ethics, management ethics, sustainable development and corporate social responsibility. The condition is that these subjects should, to a greater extent than before, help students improve their social competencies. Additionally, if the qualifications framework is implemented, it is likely that academic institutions will try to ensure a more interdisciplinary approach to education, which in practice may translate into greater collaboration among academic teachers.

According to the experts dealing with the preparation and implementation of the NQF, the educational process must prepare students to be able to take action within a group (community), and equip them with appropriate knowledge and skills to play such active role. Therefore, it is the task of academic institutions to shape students to be pro-social citizens, and not to be focused solely on their own interests. Consequently, a graduate in economics should understand the need for continuous learning and professional development, should be open to new ideas, be aware of the importance of ethical principles in the functioning of society, and also have awareness of European cultural heritage (including substantial knowledge about the values that are the foundation of modern Europe). This should result in an openness to humanistic reflection. Such a graduate should also develop, as part of social competencies, the skills to communicate and enter into a dialogue with all stakeholders. It is worth noting that the learning outcomes ought to be considered as superior to curricula. This means that subjects facilitating the development of such competencies should be in an advantageous position in relation to subjects that do not promote it.

In connection with the NQF implementation in the Polish education system, teachers should consider several issues. As it is the university Senates that define learning outcomes and faculty boards that adopt programmes, one should ensure opportunities that ethical-business subjects provide for shaping social competencies are clearly presented at the NQF implementation stage. In practice, it involves ensuring that these subjects are integrated into study programmes; that they are included in the pool of core, rather than optional modules; and that that they are allocated a considerable number of ECTS credits.

It should also be investigated whether the existing mission of the academic institution matches the new learning outcomes framework. For instance, the mission of Cracow University of Economics is stated as: “*Rerum cognoscere causas et valorem...*”, or “To learn the causes and values of things. To provide universal education. To bring together professional and general knowledge of methodological and theoretical character.” It seems that this statement does not entirely capture the essence of the proposed changes. Perhaps the existing mission statements could be slightly amended or supplemented to achieve this.

The learning outcomes for business ethics itself should also be specified. When formulating the aims of a module and its general characteristics in the module descriptor, developing social competencies (mainly those connected with working in the economic sphere) should be particularly well outlined. However, when defining the specific learning outcomes for the subject, one should divide them into three categories:

1. **Knowledge.** Students must gain basic knowledge of ethics and business ethics. Otherwise, they will be unable to understand their responsibilities for decisions made in the economic sphere;
2. **Skills.** Students must master the basic tools for the practical implementation of business ethics, e.g. in creating pro-ethical organisational culture in companies;
3. **Social skills.** Students should be able to take a stance when presented with moral dilemmas of business people.

However, all learning outcomes, particularly the last category, should be assessed in the course of discussion, in written essays, and exams that allow students to express and justify their opinions. The task of the lecturer should be to formulate problems for students in such a way so that they can express their views on these matters. It is not the role of the lecturer to determine whether these views are correct; that would be a morally and methodologically unfounded procedure. The lecturer's role should only be to determine whether students can look for solutions to business ethics dilemmas and justify and comment on their choices in terms of socio-economic consequences.

One of the training methods that should be applied, and that leads to achieving the desired results in terms of social competencies, is case studies analysis. Students should then put themselves in the case study character's shoes. Then by using their knowledge, they should judge the situation, define the ethical problem and look for solutions that can be plentiful, with none of them decisively argued. Moreover, students should justify their choices in situations where all solutions are negative, and yet one must be selected. Students should then predict the consequences of their decisions and, using their knowledge, choose the appropriate means to implement it. The decision should therefore be autonomous and bear responsibility. The ability to justify it (which may be assessed by the lecturer) can be regarded as a social competence. Assessment of learning outcomes organised in this way should also involve reviewing other competencies including social ones. Examples would be the approach to self-study (where students are given individual tasks and prepare case studies for a given problem), or the ability to cooperate (when students are given tasks to be carried out in groups).

Such a model of building a business ethics programme increases the chances to shape the thinking attitude of economics student, which is consistent with the Socratic idea of education, and also provides the subject with an opportunity to play a bigger part than before in the changes happening in Polish higher education at the moment.

Difficulties associated with the ethical education of economics students

Even with the optimistic assumption that there is widespread agreement on the direction of these future changes, it is impossible to disregard the analysis of the difficulties associated with the practical ethical education of economics students in our country. When analysing these difficulties, the following should be carefully considered:

1. Ethical-business subjects are frequently treated at our universities as so-called “dummies” since the dominant educational model is based on narrow professionalism, leading to the inability of 3rd and 4th year students to understand ethical and social arguments.
2. Most universities do not have faculties and departments dealing with business ethics or economics ethics, making it difficult to popularise the subject.
3. Frequently the lectures in business ethics or management ethics are attended by a very large number of students. Therefore, there is no possibility to establish a master-disciple relationship, which would be desirable in ethical education. According to the principles of Socratic education, one should always address an individual, which seems impossible when dealing with a very large number of people in attendance.
4. Many universities do not offer thesis seminars in business ethics, and any thesis dealing with this area is written during other seminars.
5. We still have to deal with a rather significant aversion of fellow economists to ethical business issues.
6. In legal and administrative terms, business ethics is not a scientific discipline; hence, its development is severely limited by formal factors.
7. It is not clear whether business ethics should be offered at the undergraduate and/or postgraduate level.

The changes needed in order for pro-social (and ethical) education to be possible

Eliminating the difficulties and solving the problems outlined might not be sufficient to introduce the new approach to education, which means giving it a more social slant. No activity takes place in a social vacuum, and therefore, neither does the educational activity. Each academic institution is the immediate environment for students learning there, and a significant change in students’ consciousness cannot be made, if this environment’s actions contradict the thesis, principles and solutions presented in the classroom.

For instance, in order for the knowledge about good management and its benefits to be gained, the university should be at least well managed (if not perfectly). Similarly, for the principles of ethics presented in the classroom to be accepted and assimilated by the students, the same

principles must be respected by academics, administrative representatives, and technical staff, i.e. all members of the academic community. Consequently, in order to successfully implement the social model of education in accordance with the NQF, academic institutions should take the following actions (each according to their needs and possibilities):

1. Follow clear ethical standards, as the teaching of ethics in an organisation that has not introduced ethical standards is rather puzzling and counter-productive.
2. Include social responsibility in the university's management strategy, both in a declarative and practical manner. The university should act responsibly in relation to all its stakeholders. The university's responsibility understood only as resulting from the very essence of education (as previously discussed for business) is not sufficient. The mere fact of educating does not exhaust the reserves of social responsibility. It is also about how students are educated and what the results (outcomes) of that education are.
3. Increase practical opportunities for a more interdisciplinary education.
4. Encourage academic teachers to more openly present their social attitudes at a practical level.
5. Encourage the modification of teaching methods by reducing lecture hours, and increasing hours for such teaching that would stimulate students' own thinking. It is not merely about the transfer of knowledge, but also introducing students to independent thinking. Thus, as Jaspers writes, it is about "thinking that reaches the essence of things" (Jaspers 2000: 11).
6. Introduce, on a much larger scale, module assessment based on group projects to provide students with an opportunity to cooperate. When working jointly with others, one frequently learns better and faster than when working individually through a long process of trial and error.

| **Closing remarks**

We need good pro-social education for our future managers because, as rightly observed by Aniela Dylus, management is always a joint effort of many entities connected through a system of multiple dependencies. It is a social activity. Therefore, among the arguments in favour of economic engagement are those that point to culture and the community building dimension of the whole economic system. It will strengthen individual motivation only if managers are able to understand this wholeness and realise that they are in some part responsible for its shape (Dylus 1998). There is a magnitude of work for all teachers (not only business ethics teachers). However, education requires a huge effort, because as Plato noted already in *Meno*, no one becomes a good by accident (Plato 1991).

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