

IT Solutions Supporting the Management of Higher Education Institutions in Poland

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INTRODUCTION

Operating as they are on the contemporary difficult and dynamic market, higher education institutions (HEIs) should strive to ensure suitable conditions for a continuous furthering of their educational mission. Demographic changes and competition force the authorities of HEIs to effectively manage their resources and potential. It is vital then that HEIs, through the use of sophisticated information technology, draw from the opportunities offered by multi-dimensional reporting tailored to the requirements of specific customers. The present paper presents various IT solutions that can assist HEIs by supporting effective management, administration and organization of their work. It is a result of literature studies, empirical research and own experience of the author. This publication fills a gap as a source of information about IT solutions and their application in such specific entities as higher education institutions. It shows the great role and importance of information for HEI management purposes.

BACKGROUND

The beginnings of higher education go back to antiquity when the Athenaeum was founded in Rome by Emperor Hadrian as well as the university of Alexandria. However, proper multi-departmental higher education institutions appeared only in medieval Western Europe. Among them were the University of Bologna (approx. 1088), University of Oxford (approx. 1167), University of Paris (approx. 1170), University of Cambridge

(approx. 1209) and University of Padua (1220). (*Selekcyjna funkcja...*). The first Polish university was the Kraków Academy founded in 1364. It was the second oldest university in Central Europe, after Charles University in Prague (1348) (see: www.uj.edu.pl). At the beginning of the Second Polish Republic, after the period of partitions of Poland, there were five universities (in Kraków, Vilnius, Lviv, Warsaw and Poznań), two technical universities (in Lviv and Warsaw), Szkoła Główna Gospodarstwa Wiejskiego (Warsaw University of Life Sciences), Mining Academy in Kraków and the Academy of Veterinary Medicine (Lviv) (Jaczewski, 1987, pp.206-210). WWII brought severe losses to Polish science. By the decision of the occupier, higher education was to be eliminated. In 1945-1989, during the period of People's Poland (PRL), first under Stalin and then under the socialist regime, higher education was under a strong political indoctrination. Management of higher education institutions was partly in the hands of the central administration (Thieme, 2009, p.229). In 1989 the number of HEIs went up to 97 while the number of students reached 378,000. They were only state-owned institutions with only one exception for the Catholic University of Lublin (KUL) which is a non-public university whose founding body is the church.

Since 1990s, higher education has been undergoing numerous transformations. The Higher Education Act enacted by the Polish Sejm on 12 September 1990 provided legal framework for the development of non-public education in Poland. The next law of 26 June 1996 on higher vocational schools regulated the activity of schools offering only vocational education and awarding bachelor

Table 1. Number of students in Poland in 1999-2011

| Academic Year | All Students | Students Number Indicator (1990/1991=100) | Academic Year | All students | Students Number Indicator (1990/1991=100) |
|---------------|--------------|--|---------------|--------------|--|
| 1990/1991 | 390409 | 100 | 2001/2002 | 1718747 | 440 |
| 1991/1992 | 414609 | 106 | 2002/2003 | 1800548 | 461 |
| 1992/1993 | 481273 | 123 | 2003/2004 | 1858680 | 476 |
| 1993/1994 | 568702 | 146 | 2004/2005 | 1930917 | 495 |
| 1994/1995 | 666712 | 171 | 2005/2006 | 1953832 | 500 |
| 1995/1996 | 779907 | 200 | 2006/2007 | 1941445 | 497 |
| 1996/1997 | 917939 | 235 | 2007/2008 | 1937404 | 496 |
| 1997/1998 | 1082657 | 277 | 2008/2009 | 1927762 | 494 |
| 1998/1999 | 1265347 | 324 | 2009/2010 | 1900014 | 487 |
| 1999/2000 | 1421277 | 364 | 2010/2011 | 1841251 | 472 |
| 2000/2001 | 1584804 | 406 | 2011/2012 | 1764060 | 452 |

Source: *Szkoły wyższe i ich finanse 1999-2011 [HEIs and their finances 1999-2011]*, Warsaw.

or engineer degrees. The Law on Higher Education systematised tertiary education and introduced a division into first- and second-cycle studies. Additionally, some institutions offer individual programmes of studies or regular studies in a foreign language.

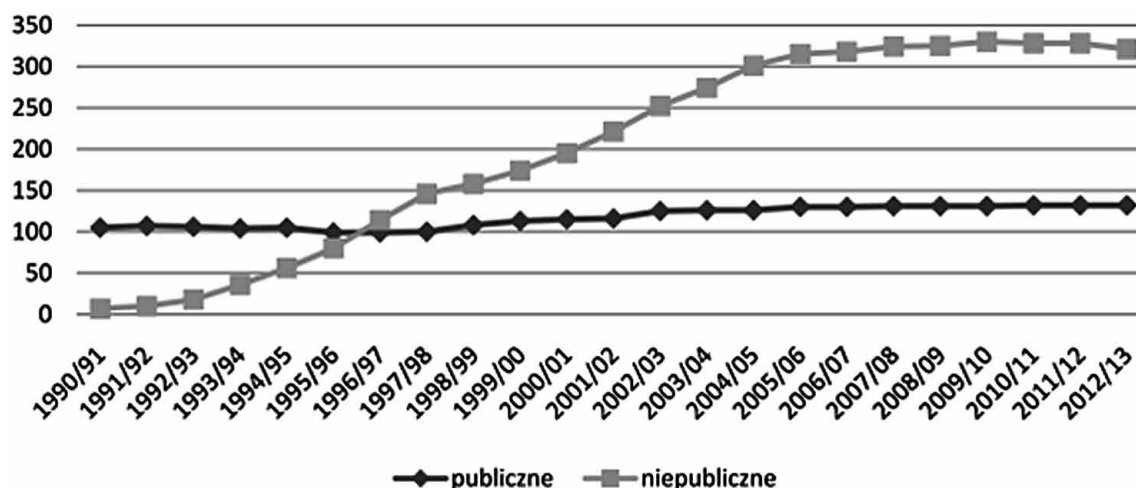
From the academic year 1990/1991 the number of students was growing until the year 2005/2006 when it reached its peak at 1.95 million. Since that time, the number of students has been on a gradual

decline. The above changes can be attributed to the decreasing population aged 19-24, to Poland's EU accession which offered Polish prospective students the opportunity to study abroad, and are also probably a consequence of amendments to the Law on Higher Education that introduced tuition fees for pursuing a second and other degrees (Report "Higher Education...", 2013).

As forecasted by the Ministry of Science and Higher Education, in the following years the above

Figure 1. Number of public and non-public HEIs in Poland

Source: *Szkoły wyższe i ich finanse w 2012 [HEIs and their finances in 2012]*, Warsaw, 2013, p.31



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