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Students with Dyslexia in Universities in Poland – Description of the Legal Situation and Good Practices

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Abstract

The aim of this article was to analyse the currently functioning system of support for students with dyslexia at state universities in Poland and to identify and assess good practices that are already being implemented. The research method used was desk research (reviewing both formal and informal documents) and included university websites and national and local legal regulations. The results showed that only nine (15%) state universities in Poland introduced concrete forms of support for the students with dyslexia and the faculty, such as exam concessions (six universities), consultations with a specialist (for students: six universities; for teachers: five universities), and provision of information and educational materials (nine universities). A comparison of the Polish support system for students with dyslexia with that of the UK resulted in a list of recommendations, including the extension of the examination time by 25% of the basic time, the assessment of written

assignments solely on the basis of content and not on the correctness of spelling and changes in the format of an exam (from written to oral).

Keywords: dyslexia, adults with dyslexia, student support system, legal regulations, rational adjustments.

Introduction

The purpose of this article is to characterise the current legal situation and identify, describe and evaluate systemic support for students with dyslexia at state higher education institutions in Poland. We analysed the contemporary legislation in Poland both at the national and local level, understood as acts and regulations passed by the Ministry of Science and Higher Education (*Ministerstwo Nauki i Szkolnictwa Wyższego* – MNiSW) and orders of the authorities of individual universities, respectively. We were interested in examining the current situation of university students with dyslexia: if and/or what kind of systemic support is offered to them at their universities, both those guaranteed by state laws and/or regulations and by the statutes of universities and/or orders of their authorities. Therefore, in this paper, we will present the range of solutions introduced both nationally and locally, the form of their announcement and implementation (e.g. regulations and/or statutes or good practices) and the types of support and services available. Our aim is to examine whether universities issued certain regulations in addition to the ones passed at a national level. We will also characterise the current legislation at the secondary school education level in order to illustrate the situation of higher education candidates just before they start their university education and how it changes after their entry into universities. Such a comparison will allow us to assess whether adjustments for students with dyslexia are similar at different stages of education. We will compare Polish legislation with that of the UK, since in the UK, the adjustments for students with dyslexia are a statutory requirement. In addition, initiatives to support students with dyslexia in Poland generally cite accommodations used in Western countries, including the UK; therefore, we want to describe one such system.

Pietrowska (2016) reported that only about 10% of the respondents in her study – 82 lecturers and 75 students (this group included both students with and without diagnosed developmental learning disorders) from selected higher education institutions in Warsaw – declared that their university introduced some systemic accommodations to support people with dyslexia. This is an alarming result, but it was formulated on the basis of the self-reports of respondents who may have had incomplete knowledge of the issue in question. Moreover, Pietrowska's (2016) study was conducted several years ago. In view of this, the purpose of the current article is to examine whether and how the support for students with dyslexia is currently defined in the official regulations at individual state higher education academic institutions through an analysis of documentation and content posted on the universities' websites. An assessment of the current situation in Poland and its comparison with the situation in the UK will be used to suggest recommendations for the support of and services that can be provided for adults with developmental learning disorders who continue their education at a university.

Dyslexia in adults

In the World Health Organization's (2019) International Statistical Classification of Diseases and Related Health Problems – 11th ed. (ICD-11), it is stated that the developmental learning disorder with impairment in reading (6A03.0; we will use the term 'dyslexia' throughout the text) is characterised by 'significant and persistent difficulties in learning academic skills related to reading, such as word reading accuracy, reading fluency and reading comprehension.' It affects 10–15% of the population (Jaklewicz et al., 1973). The difficulties experienced by people with dyslexia that persist into adulthood (Cameron & Nunkoosing, 2011; Bogdanowicz et al., 2014) include deficits in reading speed (Reid et al., 2006), access to mental lexicon, spelling (Reid et al., 2006; Bogdanowicz et al., 2014), working memory (Smith-Spark et al., 2003; Bogdanowicz et al., 2014) and short-term memory and phonological awareness (Bogdanowicz et al., 2014). Secondary emotional-motivational difficulties can accompany primary cognitive impairments (Bogdanowicz,

2003). Brante (2013) emphasised the importance of emotional support from parents and teachers' knowledge of a student's dyslexia in obtaining adequate, individualised support during higher education. Academic failures can be interpreted as personal failures (Dale & Taylor, 2001), and the teachers' lack of understanding hinders a student's success (Bogdanowicz & Wszeborowska-Lipinska, 1992). Students with dyslexia, compared to their peers without dyslexia, show lower levels of life satisfaction, positive emotions, resilience, and perceived/expected support (Kalka & Łockiewicz, 2017). In addition, the prevalence of mental health problems in young adults with dyslexia is higher than in the general population, demonstrating that dyslexia plays a role in achieving success and experiencing life satisfaction in adulthood (Undheim, 2003). As a result, adults with dyslexia are at risk of social exclusion (Łockiewicz & Bogdanowicz, 2013) and may experience lowered self-esteem (Wejner-Jaworska, 2019). These findings indicate a profound need for systemic support for people with dyslexia at all educational stages.

Support system for students with dyslexia at the national and local level – the example of the UK

According to the data published by the Higher Education Statistics Agency (2021), in the 2019/2020 academic year, 15% (341, 365) of the UK's students reported having a disability. This category included mental health and developmental learning disorders, such as dyslexia, dyspraxia and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, which accounted for as much as 34% of this group (in addition to vision and hearing impairments, motor disabilities and autism spectrum disorders, among others) and just under 6% (114, 610) of the total student population (Higher Education Statistics Agency, 2021). These data show how large a group is affected by dyslexia. Unfortunately, there is no similar statistical data available for Poland.

In the UK, dyslexia is treated as a disability under the Equality Act 2010 (UK Equality Act, 2010), which defines disability as a physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long-term (defined as lasting for a minimum of 12 months) adverse effect on an individual's ability to carry

out normal day-to-day activities (including those related to learning, such as reading). In a document issued by the Secretary of State under Section 6(5) of the Equality Act of 2010, the Office for Disability Issues specifies ‘Guidance on matters to be taken into account in determining questions relating to the definition of disability’; the cause of the disability so understood may be developmental disorders, including dyslexia, as well as other learning disabilities.

Public sector organisations, including universities, are legally obliged to promote the equality of opportunity between people who have a particular characteristic that is protected by the provisions of the Act and those who do not, and to announce how they comply with the provisions of the Act (at least once a year) and what equality goals they have established (at least once every four years). These data must be published in such a form that they are easily accessible to all those interested. Articles 90 through 94 of the Equality Act discuss the obligations of institutions in the further and higher education sectors. These include the obligation to provide so-called reasonable adjustments; however, the term reasonable adjustments itself is not specified.

The Equality and Human Rights Commission’s (2014) website provides an interpretation that reasonable adjustments should be made if an institution’s current provision, criterion or practice puts students with disabilities at a substantial disadvantage. This provision, criterion or practice should then be modified or even abandoned. However, rational action taken must not lead to a lowering of the level of knowledge, competence or skills expected and required of the general student population; these must remain the same for the students who do and do not share a certain protected characteristic. However, the way in which a student’s knowledge, competence or skills are evaluated should be modified. For example, a reasonable adjustment cannot be reducing an exam’s content, but it can be an extension of the exam’s duration and an individualised approach to the student, such as loaning the student a Dictaphone or providing them with assistance from university staff (Equality and Human Rights Commission, 2014). Moreover, the type of reasonable adjustments awarded may differ even if two students have certificates or reports stating a diagnosis of the same disorder (Cameron et al., 2019). The information

about the available adjustments should be published in advance and based on the expected (not necessarily already reported) needs of students.

In the UK, students who have a dyslexia report issued by a qualified professional can also apply for an allowance to help them pay for learning aids, including appropriate equipment (UK Government, n.d.). As a result, reasonable adjustments made at different universities, and even within the same university, vary, with the exception of the fairly common rule of extending exam durations by 25% of the standard time (Cameron et al., 2019). The charity Disability Rights UK (2021) listed examples of possible adjustments. Regardless of the type of disability, it suggested the following accommodations: access to university documents and study materials in the format preferred by a student, staff training and the provision of different types of support and services, such as financial support during the admission process and support in study skills and the use of the library (e.g. extended book loans). For students with dyslexia, the charity proposed the following accommodations: specialist tuition support (e.g. in developing language skills) conducted individually or in small groups; assistance in accessing literature; assistive technologies (e.g. a screen reader, Dictaphone, scanner; these can also be used during exams); separate exam rooms; provision of handouts and book lists in advance of classes; dictation of answers (e.g. during exams); extra time to complete assignments; and oral exams instead of or in addition to written ones (Disability Rights UK, 2021).

Method

The research method used for this study was desk research, of both formal and informal documents (Jemielniak, 2012), which, in the case of this study, included an analysis of the content of official websites of state universities in Poland, documents issued both nationally (such as regulations of the Ministry of Science and Higher Education) and locally (such as university statutes or Rector's orders [posted on universities' websites]) and a review of the relevant literature. The above analysis and review allowed us to

thoroughly explore and explain the studied phenomenon. We focused on the examination of the current systemic support offered for students with dyslexia at individual universities in Poland and the assessment of the extent of its scale. According to Jemielniak (2012, p. 376), the conclusions drawn on the basis of desk research can contribute to the introduction of reforms. The current list of state higher education academic institutions in Poland was published online by the Ministry of Education and Science (*Ministerstwo Edukacji i Nauki* – MEiN) (*Wykaz uczelni publicznych nadzorowanych przez Ministra właściwego ds. szkolnictwa wyższego – publiczne uczelnie akademickie, n.d.*). The ministerial list includes universities, universities of technology, universities of economics, universities of agriculture and life sciences, universities of pedagogy, universities of physical education, and 1 church higher education institution. Thus, adopting the terminology used by the Ministry when discussing the results of our own research, the term ‘higher education institutions’, ‘state academic universities’ or ‘universities’ is used. All universities listed on the aforementioned website were included in our analysis, thus extending Pietrowska’s (2016) study, which included only higher education institutions located in Warsaw. Our aim was to increase the generalisability of our results. The desk research also allowed us to describe the actual state of current regulations at specific universities, as opposed to a survey completed by respondents who may not have had full knowledge of the phenomenon of interest to the study.

The method of searching for information on the universities’ websites involved visiting each university’s homepage, then finding a tab leading to the homepage of the department or office responsible for supporting students with disabilities. Among the content available in a given tab, the first author searched for information under the following terms: ‘*dysleksja*’ (dyslexia), ‘*specyficzne trudności w uczeniu się*’ (specific learning difficulties), ‘*trudności w uczeniu się*’ (learning disabilities), ‘*zaburzenia uczenia się*’ (learning disorders). The search was conducted in Polish. The terms mentioned were used in the literature (Bogdanowicz, 2012; Łockiewicz & Bogdanowicz, 2013; Krasowicz-Kupis, 2020) and in legal regulations for school-age students. The

website review took place between 26th September, 2021 and 6th November, 2021; it was conducted by the first author of the article.

Support system for students with dyslexia at the threshold of higher education – national legislation at the secondary school level

We will begin our document review with an analysis of the support system for students with dyslexia at the threshold of higher education. In Poland, psychological and educational intervention (*zajęcia korekcyjno-kompensacyjne*) for school-age students with dyslexia is delivered on school premises, in the form of small-group (up to five students) lessons with a specialist teacher; this is regulated by the Regulation of the Ministry of Education of 9 August 2017 (MEN, 2017).

Adjustments to the conditions and forms in the external (*matura*) exam are regulated by the Announcements of the Central Examination Board, issued once a year. The Announcement of 20 August 2021 ‘on detailed ways of adjusting the conditions and forms of the *matura* exam in the school year 2021/2022’ (Director of the Central Examination Board, 2021) informs that in order to be entitled to these adjustments due to having dyslexia, a student must present to the school a dyslexia evaluation report (*opinia psychologiczno-pedagogiczna*) issued by a psychological-educational counselling centre (*poradnia psychologiczno-pedagogiczna*). The adjustments include specific, detailed scoring rules for short answer, essay and computational questions (for example, during the Polish or mathematics exam). In addition, a student with dysgraphia may type their responses. The duration of the written exam is, however, not extended. Nevertheless, these adjustments are evidence-based and aim to allow students with dyslexia to fully demonstrate their actual knowledge and skills. An annual *matura* report (Central Examination Board, 2021) showed that 10.66% (29,249) of students who had taken the exam at a basic level and 9.9% (5,624) who took the exam at an extended level applied for and received the adjustments in 2021. This percentage shows that a relatively large number of young people on the threshold of higher education are still struggling with reading problems.

Support system for university students with dyslexia – national legislation

‘The Law on Higher Education and Science’ (Prawo o szkolnictwie wyższym i nauce, 2018), introduced many changes in the higher education system in Poland. However, none of them concerned the introduction of a support system for university students with dyslexia.

Two documents, directly related to the aforementioned Act, advocate for a change in legal regulations. The first is the Resolution of the Advisory Panel for Student Affairs of the Ministry of Science and Higher Education (Advisory Panel for Student Affairs of the MNiSW, 2019). The initiative aimed to draw public attention to the situation of university students with dyslexia in Poland. The Resolution notes that while support systems for such students are already in place at renowned universities in other countries, such as Harvard University in the United States, the Polish legal system only provides legal obligations concerning the situations of students with dyslexia at the level of primary and secondary education. It concludes with a proposal to take specific actions, which include: helping the students with the assessment of learning disorders, the development of specially adapted study materials, exam accommodations and dissemination of knowledge about dyslexia among the faculty. Currently, work on the project has been discontinued, although the archived copies of the documents can still be found on the Ministry’s official website. The second initiative is the activity of the Commission for Equality of Educational Opportunity at the Conference of Rectors of Academic Schools in Poland (CRASP, n.d.), which was established at the initiative of the members of the Cracow Agreement (*Krakowskie Porozumienie*), which includes seven universities, mostly from Cracow (AGH University of Science and Technology in Krakow, Tadeusz Kosciuszko Cracow University of Technology, Cracow University of Economics, Jagiellonian University, The Pontifical University of Pope John Paul II, Pedagogical University of Cracow, University of Rzeszow). The Commission’s aim was to create a centre that would integrate all Polish universities and their activities for educational support in higher education. The Commission developed seven principles for such support in Document No. 52/VI (CRASP, 2016) and, among other things, mentioned

'rational adjustments', a term used in the UK (p. 4). Although the plan for the implementation of good practices at the national level focuses primarily on people with disabilities, such as visual, auditory or motor impairments, it proposes also extending support to students without the so-called a disability degree certificate (*orzeczenie*), and therefore, to students with dyslexia, since in Poland, an official diagnosis of dyslexia is issued by psychological-educational counselling centres as an evaluation report (*opinia psychologiczno-pedagogiczna*), not a disability degree certificate (*orzeczenie*), in accordance with the provisions of Prawo Oświatowe (2016).

Support system for students with dyslexia – local legislation

In Poland, there are 59 state universities supervised by the Minister of Education and Science, including 18 universities, 18 universities of technology, five universities of economics, five universities of pedagogy, six universities of agriculture and life sciences, six universities of physical education and one church higher education institution (MEiN, n. d.). The websites of all of the above universities were analysed to identify good practices towards students with dyslexia (see method subsection). Table 1 presents information of only those universities that declare such support (on their websites, see References).

Common and different features of good practices at universities

As no regulations exist at the national level, we conducted an analysis of the accommodations implemented by state academic universities in Poland. A review of the websites of all 59 universities showed that only 15% (nine) of them make adjustments.

Each university examined for the study has a unit and/or (less frequently) a position (e.g. a Plenipotentiary of the Rector) dedicated to and responsible for the support of people with disabilities within its organisational structure. The names for such units vary by university, but all of them aim, as obliged by the provisions of the Law on Higher Education and Science (Prawo o szkol-

Table 1. Characteristics of the support system for students with dyslexia at state academic universities in Poland

Higher Education Institutions	Jagiellonian University in Cracow	University of Warsaw	Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznan	University of Lodz (Akademickie Centrum Wsparcia)	Warsaw University of Technology (Sekcja ds. Osob Niepełnosprawnych)	AGH University of Science and Technology in Krakow (Office for the Disabled (Biuro ds. Osob Niepełnosprawnych))	Wroclaw University of Technology (Department of Accessibility and Disabilities (Zdział Dostępności i Wsparcia Osob z Niepełnosprawnościami))	Cracow University of Economics (Office for the Disabled (Biuro ds. Osob Niepełnosprawnych))	Warsaw University of Life Sciences (Studentzi z niepełnosprawnościami)
Students	Exam accommodations	✓	✓	-	-	-	✓	✓	✓
	Education	Consultation with a specialist	✓	-	-	-	-	✓	✓
		Informational materials	✓	✓	✓	-	-	✓	✓
Lecturers	Education	✓	-	-	-	-	✓	✓	
	Education	Consultation with a specialist	✓	-	-	-	-	✓	
		Informational materials	✓	✓	✓	-	✓	✓	
Terminology	Dyslexia, reading and writing difficulties	Learning impairment e.g. dyslexia	Dyslexia, additional educational needs	Dyslexia	Dyslexia, specific difficulties in reading and writing	Dyslexia	Dyslexia	Dyslexia	Dyslexia, specific difficulties in reading and writing

Source: Authors' study.

nictwie wyższym i nauce, 2018), ‘to create conditions for people with disabilities that allow them to fully participate in the educational process and scientific research’ (art. 11.1.). There are both Academic Support Centres (*Akademickie Centra Wsparcia*) or Support Offices for Persons with Disabilities (*Biura Wsparcia Osób z Niepełnosprawnościami*) – the names of which reflect an inclusive approach that promotes the use of person-first language (Crocker & Smith, 2019) – and Offices for the Disabled (*Biura ds. Osób Niepełnosprawnych*). The latter name, however, is consistent with the provisions of the Act. Since, according to Polish legislation, the term ‘person with a disability’ does not include people with dyslexia, the universities are not legally obliged to make adjustments for this group. That said, we believe that the ability of students with dyslexia to fully participate in the educational process and scientific research, as guaranteed in the Law on Higher Education and Science (Prawo o szkolnictwie wyższym i nauce, 2018), may be limited due to their significant and persistent difficulties with reading and writing. Thus, we were interested in examining whether adjustments were introduced by universities themselves and if so, what they were. None of the analysed universities had a separate unit dedicated to supporting people with learning disabilities, including dyslexia.

All nine universities that published information on how they support students with dyslexia on their websites used the term dyslexia, but some also employed additional terminology: the University of Warsaw added the term ‘*niesprawność uczenia się*’ (learning impairment); Jagiellonian University added ‘*trudności w czytaniu i pisaniu*’ (reading and writing difficulties); Warsaw University of Technology and Warsaw University of Life Sciences – SGGW added ‘*specyficzne trudności w czytaniu i pisaniu*’ (specific difficulties in reading and writing), while Adam Mickiewicz University added ‘*dodatkowe potrzeby edukacyjne*’ (additional educational needs). The last term is similar, but not identical, to the term ‘*specjalne potrzeby edukacyjne*’ (special educational needs), which is commonly used in psychological and educational literature (Bogdanowicz, 2003; 2014).

Six (10%) universities in Poland introduced exam accommodations. Furthermore, students at these universities can consult with a specialist. The

offered exam accommodations include: use of a computer to type the answers for an exam (Jagiellonian University, Adam Mickiewicz University and University of Warsaw), extension of the exam time (University of Warsaw: by 25% or 50% of the standard time – the extra time length is decided upon based on the type of the health issues; Adam Mickiewicz University and Cracow University of Economics: by 50% of the standard time); allowing a student to prepare a written outline of their answer when taking an oral exam; the possibility of dividing the exam into several sittings if extensive content material has to be studied in order to pass the exam (Adam Mickiewicz University); access to assistive technology, such as computers and special software (University of Warsaw, Adam Mickiewicz University, Wrocław University of Technology and Warsaw University of Life Sciences – SGGW); assistance of tutors; changing the format of the exam (e.g. from written to oral or vice versa; Adam Mickiewicz University); receiving study materials from lecturers; recording classes; prolonging the exam session and waiver of penalisation for minor spelling errors (e.g. letter shifting and omission) when demonstrating spelling accuracy is not the purpose of the assignment (Jagiellonian University). Consultation with a specialist can take the form of assistive technology training and support from an educational advisor (Jagiellonian University) and assistance in submitting relevant documents and teaching effective learning strategies (Adam Mickiewicz University).

Five (9%) universities offer support to their lecturers; faculty members can consult with a specialist (Adam Mickiewicz University, Wrocław University of Technology, Cracow University of Economics and Warsaw University of Life Sciences – SGGW). Such consultation may be in the form of training in the methods of supporting students with dyslexia (Jagiellonian University).

Nine (15%) universities provide informational and educational materials on dyslexia. Two of them (AGH University of Science and Technology in Krakow and Warsaw University of Technology) offer only this form of support. The dyslexia awareness materials include awareness training for instructors at AGH University of Science and Technology in Krakow (*Dostosowywanie Lektoratów do Potrzeb Osób z Niepełnosprawnościami*, 2021); a completed

Dyslexia for teachers of English as a foreign language (DysTEFL) project at University of Lodz (Projekt UŁ „DysTEFL” wyróżniony przez Komisję Europejską, n.d.); providing a link to another website that describes dyslexia (Warsaw University of Technology; the link redirects to the materials developed by Jagiellonian University); articles and interviews published on university websites (University of Warsaw); ‘With dyslexia through studies’ training for students (Cracow University of Economics); guidelines for lecturers on how to work with students with dyslexia (Warsaw University of Life Sciences – SGGW and Wrocław University of Technology); and a detailed description of adaptations and adjustments (Jagiellonian University and Adam Mickiewicz University).

The application process to receive support is identical for students with all types of disorders and disabilities. The student contacts the Office for Persons with Disabilities (or an analogous unit with a different name), then completes the relevant documents. Students who have an evaluation report issued by a psychological-educational counselling centre verifying the diagnosis of dyslexia (Jagiellonian University and Adam Mickiewicz University) or a document verifying their state of health (University of Warsaw) are eligible for support. The other six universities do not explicitly say which external documents (e.g. evaluation reports) are required. None of the universities have separate application forms for students with dyslexia; all students, regardless of the type of disorder or disability, submit the same application forms. Some of the application forms, however, explicitly state that they should be completed by students with dyslexia (University of Warsaw, Adam Mickiewicz University and Jagiellonian University; see References for a list of application forms: Podanie o adaptację procesu studiowania, n.d.; Wniosek o przyznanie Racjonalnych Dostosowań w procesie kształcenia dla studentów z niepełnosprawnością lub z trudnościami w uczeniu się, n.d.; the Rector of the University of Warsaw, 2020). In addition, Order No. 122 of the Rector of the Jagiellonian University (2012) regulates in detail who can apply for an adjustment, and although the adjustments also apply to students with dyslexia (as reported on the website), the disorder is not directly mentioned in the document.

Discussion

The analysis of the documents showed that, in Poland, there are no provisions at the national level in the Act of 20 July 2018, Law on Higher Education and Science (Prawo o szkolnictwie wyższym i nauce, 2018) that would require state academic universities to make reasonable adjustments for students with dyslexia. Our article also discusses two separate documents/initiatives related to the legal situation of university students with dyslexia. These are the Resolution of the Advisory Panel for Student Affairs of the Ministry of Higher Education No. 6/2019 and the activities of the Commission for Equality of Educational Opportunity at the CRASP. These initiatives show that the problem of the lack of legislation at the national level in Poland has been noticed and precursory actions in this regard are being taken. The proposed actions include introducing exam accommodations, disseminating knowledge about dyslexia among the academics and promoting good practices. A legislative solution at the national level could be the introduction of an amendment to the Law on Higher Education (Prawo o szkolnictwie wyższym i nauce, 2018, art. 11.1.), adding the phrase *‘osobom z rozwojowymi zaburzeniami uczenia się’* (for persons with developmental learning disorders), so that the provision as amended would read *‘stwarzanie osobom niepełnosprawnym oraz osobom z rozwojowymi zaburzeniami uczenia się warunków do pełnego udziału w procesie kształcenia i badaniach naukowych’* (creating conditions for persons with disabilities and persons with developmental learning disorders to participate fully in the education and scientific research process). Such a provision could contribute to the realisation of the idea of an open-for-all university, as emphasised by academic institutions in Poland, such as Adam Mickiewicz University.

On all of the websites analysed, to access the information on support and services for students with dyslexia, a user has to click the tab of the Office for Persons with Disabilities (or of an analogous unit with a different name), and the application process itself is identical for all students, regardless of the type of disorder or disability. This means that the Offices for Persons with Disabilities are also responsible for organising support for students with

dyslexia. Such an arrangement may confuse some potential applicants, since in Poland, dyslexia is not understood as a type of disability (*niepełnosprawność*). Therefore, there is an inconsistency between the terminological assumptions and the actual legal status of the disorder, contrary to the situation in the UK, where the term disability includes dyslexia. However, for organisational and theoretical reasons, we believe it is appropriate that the experts who specialise in supporting students with broadly-defined special educational needs and who already work in the Offices for People with Disabilities should also be responsible for supporting people with dyslexia. This arrangement could function independently of any legislative changes. Information about the fact that the Offices for Persons with Disabilities also offer support for people with dyslexia should be more widely and clearly disseminated, for example, separate subpages could be created. Currently, none of the universities have separate application forms for students with dyslexia. This raises the question of how many students actually apply for help, and how many do not do so due to their lack of knowledge that such an opportunity exists. For example, only three out of 13 respondents in MacCullagh et al.'s (2017) study received assistance from the equivalent of the Polish Office for Persons with Disabilities, mainly in the form of exam accommodations. Students with dyslexia, however, should not be expected to take full responsibility for seeking support themselves, the university should proactively inform them about available adjustments (Cameron & Nunkoosing, 2012). The aforementioned modification of websites, an information campaign and maximum simplification of forms designed for people with reading difficulties are advisable. A solution could be the development of separate application forms for different groups of applicants depending on the disorder that they struggle with, so that students do not have to search through the form for content relevant to their case, or the assistance of an officer employed by the Office for Persons with Disabilities in filling out the document. Nevertheless, students with dyslexia should be clearly informed that they do not have a disability (taking into account the meaning of the equivalent term in Polish), and that the Offices coordinate support for them due to organisational reasons. For the above reasons, we believe that the most appropriate name for units supporting students with various difficulties of

varying degrees of severity would be 'Academic Support Centre', as proposed by the University of Lodz.

The desk research conducted for our paper showed that 100% of universities that offer support for students with dyslexia (nine universities; 15% of the total number of state academic universities in Poland) use the term 'dyslexia', but some use additional terminology, for example Adam Mickiewicz University uses a term 'additional educational needs' (Lektorat dla studentów o dodatkowych potrzebach edukacyjnych, n.d.). In the literature, the term 'special educational needs', used in the Warnock Report of 1978, referred to 20% of students (Bogdanowicz, 1995), including those with dyslexia (Bogdanowicz, 1995; MEN, 2017). Reasonable adjustments for students with dyslexia usually include both *extra* measures (e.g. extended exam writing time) and *adjusting* measures, such as modifying the rules for scoring exam short answer, essay and computational questions.

Universities, therefore, use scientific and clinical terms with varying degrees of generality and different wording (Table 1). The term '*specjalne potrzeby edukacyjne*' (special educational needs), which is present in ministerial acts and regulations, most likely corresponds to the terms '*niesprawność uczenia się*' (learning impairment) and '*dodatkowe potrzeby edukacyjne*' (additional educational needs), while the term '*rozwojowe zaburzenia uczenia się z trudnościami w czytaniu*' (developmental learning disorders with impairment in reading) corresponds to '*trudności w czytaniu i pisaniu*' (reading and writing difficulties) and '*specyficzne trudności w czytaniu i pisaniu*' (specific reading and writing difficulties). These terms differ in what exact difficulties they denote (they all, however, also refer in some way to dyslexia), and therefore, imply awarding adjustments to slightly different groups of students. Thus, we recommend standardising the terminology to ensure that it is clear, to both the staff of the Offices for Persons with Disabilities and the students, which specific disorders are covered by the term used and who can apply for support. We believe that the most appropriate solution is to widely adopt the terminology used in the acts and regulations of the Ministry of Education and Science or, in the future, in the ICD-11 (at the time of the writing of this paper, there is still no official Polish translation of this publication) and

to require from a student the presentation of a report (*opinia*) issued by a psychological-educational counselling centre to document the need for obtaining adjustments.

Our research showed that only six (10%) universities in Poland introduced alternative exam arrangements and the possibility of a consultation with a specialist for the students. MacCullagh et al. (2017), who interviewed 13 Australian university students with dyslexia and 20 without, found that respondents with learning disabilities with reading impairment self-reported putting great effort into learning, spending a great deal of time on it and using multiple learning strategies. On the one hand, this approach may mean that the students studied the material in greater depth and developed their own creative problem-solving skills. On the other hand, it can involve, for example, the risk of mental problems related to overwork and not having enough time to develop one's interests. For this reason, we believe that the wider introduction of consultation services for students with dyslexia is essential. In Australia, individual consultations for students (Couzens et al., 2015) and small-group tutoring (MacCullagh et al., 2017) have been introduced at the specific universities studied. At one British university, individual learning plans are prepared for each student with dyslexia (Taylor et al., 2017).

The desk research conducted for our article showed that only five (9%) Polish universities also organised consultations with a specialist for lecturers. Cameron and Nunkoosing (2012) suggested that such training should be provided by students or graduates with dyslexia, so that academics can learn first-hand about personal experiences and challenges resulting from living with dyslexia.

Previous research in Poland points to the need for the dissemination of reliable information about learning disabilities, including evidence-based knowledge about effective teaching and learning techniques, to academic staff and students. A report prepared by the University of Warsaw (Kochanska et al., 2021) showed that lecturers and doctoral candidates demonstrated some knowledge of dyslexia. However, 43% of the respondents (201 people out of 468) had trouble determining whether people with dyslexia manifest spelling difficulties in addition to reading difficulties. Of the respondents, 38% (177)

did not know whether dyslexia lasts for a person's lifetime. Additionally, as many as 95% of the 157 respondents (lecturers and students from Warsaw universities) in Pietrowska's (2016) study were not aware of any assistive technologies, facilities or software that could be used by people with dyslexia to facilitate their learning. Therefore, it is very useful that 100% of the Polish universities that offer support for students with dyslexia identified in our study (nine universities; 15% of the total number of state academic universities) provide informational and educational materials on dyslexia on their websites, in the form of, for example, interviews with specialists. Clear guidance on what supportive actions the lecturers are required to take is essential (Cameron & Nunkoosing, 2012) since, as shown by a case study of one university in Australia, only some (though a significant group) of the lecturers were supportive and flexible in their approach (Couzens et al., 2015). Students at this university claimed that competent and supportive lecturers and tutors were the second most effective source of support (after informal groups).

The document analysis conducted for our research showed that the extension of the examination time typically equals between 25% and 50% of the standard time. Following the British arrangements (Cameron et al., 2019), we suggest setting the accommodated extra time on tests at 25% of the standard time. Since spelling problems persist in adults with dyslexia (Reid et al., 2006; Łockiewicz et al., 2013), we suggest scoring written work solely on the basis of its content, waiving penalisation for spelling inaccuracies. Changing the format of the exam from written to oral may only be necessary if a student distorts the text so severely that it is either impossible or very difficult for an examiner to assess the content of the work. Receiving the study materials before the class starts would allow students to better spread out their assigned reading, which is important in light of the slow rate of reading among adults with dyslexia (Reid et al., 2006). Making these materials available to the entire class would allow all students to become familiar with the course content in advance. Class recordings could be helpful for those students who have difficulty with taking notes (MacCullagh et al., 2017). Alternatively, a lecturer could share their slides with the group. Students with dyslexia, however, are unlikely to face more difficulties than students without dyslexia during oral

exams. Thus, in our opinion, adjustments are not needed in those cases. Allowing a student to type, rather than hand-write, their answers in an exam due to the illegibility of the student's handwriting should be considered if a student has been diagnosed with developmental motor coordination disorder (coded 6A04 ['dysgrafia'] in the ICD-11) with or without co-occurring dyslexia. If a student has only been diagnosed with dyslexia, such an adjustment seems unwarranted. The introduction of the above adjustments would allow for a more accurate assessment of the actual knowledge, skills and competencies of students with dyslexia, despite the persistence of their reading and writing difficulties in adulthood and would then be consistent with adjustments awarded during earlier stages of education.

Conclusions and recommendations

The research findings lead to the conclusion that the current legislation in Poland does not regulate the support system for university students with dyslexia at the national level, in contrast to the support system for primary and secondary school students with dyslexia. All Polish higher education institutions analysed in the study declare the provision of specific forms of support and services for their students with certain disorders and disabilities, implementing legal requirements and obligations, and have a unit within their organisational structures dedicated to and responsible for providing such support. It is also encouraging that 15% (nine) of the universities decided to extend support to students with dyslexia on their own initiative, despite the lack of nationwide regulations. However, this is still a very small percentage. We hope that this percentage will steadily increase, and that the remaining universities will benefit from the already-implemented good practices. To conclude, we include a list of recommendations for a support system for students with dyslexia at Polish universities:

1. Introduce systemic support and services for students with dyslexia (and other learning disorders) at all higher education institutions in Poland.

2. Allow already existing organisational units responsible for supporting people with other disorders and disabilities to coordinate the support.
3. Change the names of the above-mentioned units in accordance with the inclusive approach to 'Academic Support Centres' (Akademickie Centra Wsparcia).
4. Provide clear indication that the above-mentioned units also support students with developmental learning disorders, e.g. through links on websites, with clear division of the webpages into tabs for neurodevelopmental disorders, such as 'Developmental Learning Disorder' / 'Autism Spectrum Disorder' / 'Persons with Disabilities', and/or an information campaign.
5. Standardise dyslexia-related terminology in accordance with the latest scientific knowledge (ICD-11).
6. Post informational materials on dyslexia on the universities' websites, aimed at both students and faculty members (e.g. tips for working with students with dyslexia).
7. Provide dyslexia awareness training and workshops for lecturers and students (e.g. on the characteristics of the phenomenon and effective teaching and learning strategies, respectively).
8. Form support groups composed of other students and graduates with similar difficulties, coordinated by students from the psychology and education faculties.
9. Provide clear listing of the documents necessary to apply for support, such as evaluation reports (opinie psychologiczno-pedagogiczne) from psychological-educational counselling centres, and develop application forms (links to sample application forms are provided in the references).
10. Extend the duration of exams by 25% of the basic testing time.
11. Provide access to study materials (e.g. slides, reading assignments) before the start of the semester.
12. Score written work based only on content, not on spelling accuracy.

13. In special cases:
 - a. Change the exam format (from written to oral).
 - b. Allow students to record lectures/classes (audio only) or make already recorded lectures available to the students.
 - c. Allow for the typing of answers on a computer during the exam (if a student has co-occurring dysgraphia).

These adjustments should be tailored to the individual difficulty profile of each student. We hope that the above recommendations will be discussed by researchers and practitioners involved in the education of adults, especially those with learning disabilities, and will contribute to the implementation of good practices and legislation throughout the country.

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