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Academic Ethos in the Times of the McDonaldisation of Universities: a Few Reflections on the Consequences of the Economisation and Financialisation of Science

Introductory remarks

Universities usually perform many important functions, not only of a didactic nature, but also of a creative nature, related to an innovative approach to an increasingly complex reality. Historically, they played not only an educational and research role, but also a culture-forming one. It was also expressed by the academic ethos. At the same time, along with the progression of the globalisation of economic processes, there is a tendency to implement in universities, as well as in broadly understood science, processes that have so far been characteristic of the market mechanism. Their goal is to take into account economic processes in the activities of universities, and thus strive to subordinate their functioning to the processes of economisation and financialisation. Both of these phenomena are typical of market processes and of their participants, who are mainly economic entities. The clash of these two dimensions, i.e. the academic ethos embedded in academic values and the economic approach to the functions of universities, manifests itself, for example, in the McDonald-

isation of the university. As a consequence, universities focus mainly on those aspects of their activities that are economically effective, including, for example, the provision of mechanised educational services to clients who are students. This process may result in universities losing their specific character, i.e. being the centres of creative inspiration, creative discourse between scientists, and creating and disseminating the academic ethos.

Therefore, the aim of this study is to try to answer the following research questions: first, what are the consequences for universities of their economisation and financialisation, and, second, how does their McDonaldisation affect the academic ethos.

The study uses the dogmatic, legal, and comparative methods.

1. The academic ethos – the essence

In the literature, J. J. Jadacki distinguishes the following elements of the academic ethos. The first of them relates to the field of scientific research, which should be characterised by, among other things, usefulness, restraint, good scientific questioning, an effective method of research, results that should be true or sufficiently substantiated statements, as well as precise, beautiful language.¹ The second element of the academic ethos mentioned by this author is that science (in order to be true) should meet the requirement of relevance.² The third element of the academic ethos refers to a scientist, an academic professor, who must also be a tutor (in order to overcome the feeling of loneliness associated with research, he should arouse in the students, for example, a constant fascination with the subject of research), a guide (indicate to the student what field is worth researching), and supervisor (keep the charges under the tension necessary to conduct thorough research).³ As the author states, in order to meet the above tasks, a university professor must be: “as a guide – a real master in his field; as a guardian – understanding and patient curator of the delicate creative personality of his pupils; as an overseer – a strict enforcer of the imperative of thorough research”.⁴

The above elements of the academic ethos may constitute a specific determinant of what should be taken into account in the course of re-

1 Jacek J. Jadacki, “Etos akademicki”, *Roczniki Filozoficzne* 53, 2 (2005): 75–76.

2 Ibidem: 76.

3 Ibidem: 79.

4 Ibidem.

search and teaching activities undertaken at universities {(universities)?}. Undoubtedly, the academic ethos can be analysed in connection with the functions of the university, especially the values it ensures. It seems that today's higher education (university) and its functions should be analysed precisely through the prism of implementing specific values. The historical term for the university is derived from the Latin term *universitas scientiarum*, translated as the general of sciences, universities.⁵ As J. Brzeziński points out, the world of the university gathered people who were close to such values as: "autonomy, freedom, democracy, truth, pluralism. The University was also distinguished by the fact that it creatively combined two processes – research and teaching. As a result, the language of these values has always connected those who, striving to learn the truth, believed that they could and must share their achievements with others, and those who not only know this truth, but also wanted to know the paths leading to it. In other words, it connected professors and students".⁶ Therefore, in this study the academic ethos will be understood precisely through the prism of the above mentioned values that the university should pursue. It is possible to wonder whether it is possible at present, in these times of the dominant economisation of all manifestations of socio-economic life. For this purpose, first, the process of McDonaldisation itself, as well as economisation and financialisation, i.e. typically economic processes, should be briefly characterised, and then referring to the potential impact of these phenomena on universities and science, especially the academic ethos.

2. McDonaldisation of universities as a process aimed at their marketisation

The phenomenon of McDonaldisation was defined and described by George Ritzer, who defined it as "the process of gradual dissemination of the principles of fast food restaurant operation in all areas of social life in the United States and around the world".⁷ This author distinguished four determinants of this process, such as efficiency, calculation, predictability,

⁵ Stanisław Lam, *Trzaski, Everta i Michalskiego słownik wyrazów obcych* (Warszawa: Księgarnia Wydawnicza Trzaska, Evert and Michalski, 1939), 2,296 quoted after: Krzysztof Leja, *Zarządzanie uczelnia. Koncepcje i współczesne wyzwania* (Warszawa: Wolters Kluwer Polska, 2013), 29.

⁶ Jerzy Brzeziński, "Etos akademicki", *Forum Dydaktyczne* 7–8 (2011): 15.

⁷ George Ritzer, *Macdonaldyzacja społeczeństwa* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Literackie Muza, 1997), 16–17.

and the possibility of manipulation by replacing human work with technology without human participation.⁸ G. Ritzer also characterised each of these markers of McDonaldisation.

The first of them, efficiency, concerns the search for the optimal means leading to the goal, which manifests itself, *inter alia*, in the improvement of processes, simplification of goods and services, transferring the services previously performed by employees to the consumer. In this sense, efficiency applies to both customers and employees, and is governed by workplace regulations.⁹ In the case of universities, their clients are students, employees – mainly research and teaching staff, but also employees of the administration division. On the other hand, regulations at the workplace include not only those regulating the employment relationship (as in a typical workplace), but also various types of regulations that are directly related to the broadly understood sphere of science and didactics, i.e. both regarding the assessment of scientific achievements and the organization of the teaching process during the academic year.

Another determinant of McDonaldisation is understood as the quantitative nature of services and their features. It is not the quality (which is established as a standard) that is emphasised, but the quantity of the goods (services) received, and evoking the feeling of abundance in the recipient. The same requirements also apply to employees, because they are to work quickly, a lot, and for a low wage.¹⁰ With regard to science and universities, this feature of McDonaldisation can be defined as striving to prepare an educational service and a *product* in the form of a scientific work (without distinguishing whether it will be, for example, a scientific article or a scientific monograph), in which the main element will be {their?} number, determined on the basis of specific standards (in Polish practice determined on the basis of the so-called parameterisation). In the case of didactics, these may be, for example, learning outcomes that a student should achieve in the course of education at higher education. However, in relation to science, there are specific parameterisation criteria on the basis of which the scientific achievements of a given researcher-didactic employee will be assessed (including, for example, elements such as the number of points obtained for a specific scientific publication). Therefore, what is important here is a specific *efficiency* in creating scientific works, which could be assessed for each employee in the form of a specific number of points obtained for scientific achievements in a given period. In

⁸ Ibidem, 31 and subsequent.

⁹ Ibidem, 31–32, 112

¹⁰ Ibidem, 32–33, 144.

some universities, in order to increase this result, equal financial incentive systems are used, which are to direct the employee to publish the types of scientific studies desired by the employer, which – in the longer term – should improve the overall parametric assessment of the unit (faculty, university). Thus, it is clearly noticeable here that the scientific activity is oriented towards the result that is to be measured on the basis of parametric criteria. The academic ethos and the above-mentioned elements do not count at all in this process.

Another determinant of McDonaldisation, predictability, means that goods (services) will be the same everywhere and always. This feature of McDonaldisation concerns discipline, systematisation, and following well-established patterns. It should be emphasised that the same criteria also apply to employees who are required to behave in a predictable manner. This is achieved by regulations that ensure an extreme standardisation of relations between consumers and the entrepreneur's staff.¹¹

A feature of McDonaldisation is also the possibility of manipulation by replacing human work with technology without human participation, and therefore the use of artificial intelligence. The purpose of using the technology here is, for example, to control and manipulate the consumer/client in order – by reducing the randomness of his behaviour – to make him more susceptible to the McDonaldisation process. The possibility of manipulation is particularly visible in the case of employees who are replaced by technology (machines), thus allowing the entrepreneur to supervise them.¹² This determinant of McDonaldisation in the case of universities is particularly visible during the COVID-19 pandemic, during which, owing to sanitary restrictions, classes were conducted only remotely. As a consequence, the didactic process took place through the use of only information technologies and the Internet (with some exceptions concerning, for example, medical sciences, where direct form of education was necessary as part of practical classes). In connection with such a remote education formula, one may wonder whether in the future the participation of research and teaching staff will not be limited only to specific activities. Since it is possible to record didactic classes or presentations and then play them repeatedly (for example, on a YouTube channel or as part of various other IT systems used in the education process), it may turn out that the employee's participation will no longer be necessary throughout the education process. After all, a student can play back previously recorded classes, read the materials made available

¹¹ *Ibidem*, 33–34, 176.

¹² *Ibidem*, 35, 206.

to him within a given subject, and even remotely solve the test, write an essay, by contacting the lecturer only remotely during the entire education process. Of course, another aspect of this process is the increase in the ability of supervisors to control employees. Since all activities related to education take place remotely, an employer who has access, for example, to the employee's login data to the educational platform, can check the employee's activity in detail.

McDonaldisation is a phenomenon that has both advantages and disadvantages. Among its advantages, G. Ritzer mentions, *inter alia*, greater availability of goods, for a greater number of people who can meet their needs faster, greater standardisation of services, including adjusting them to the financial capabilities of consumers. McDonaldised systems also guarantee a sense of security in the rapidly changing world; quantification that enables the comparison of competing goods and services.¹³

In the case of universities, one may wonder whether some of the above-mentioned advantages of McDonaldisation can be considered a *de facto* advantage. For example, quantification to compare competing services (i.e. education services) can be partially verified by comparing learning outcomes. When comparing universities, various types of rankings are also used to help systematise the position of individual universities or fields of study.

Within these rankings, various elements are taken into account, both related to the provision of technical and human resources, as well as teaching and research activity. However, there may be doubts as to whether universities, departments, fields of study can be compared mainly by using these criteria. Sometimes, the quality of research at universities may be determined by factors that are difficult to quantify, such as a team of recognised researchers and educators who can inspire their students.

Among the disadvantages of McDonaldisation, R. Ritzer mentions, among others, the irrationality of rationality (which he describes as the fifth determinant of this phenomenon) manifested in unpredictability, ineffectiveness, non-calculation, and loss of control over the situation, or the related dehumanisation of clients and employees.¹⁴ At this point, one should refer to one of the above drawbacks, which G. Ritzer defined as the irrationality of McDonaldisation rationality.¹⁵ This author, however

¹³ Ibidem, 37–38.

¹⁴ Ibidem, 39–40, 207–208, 222–224.

¹⁵ This feature of McDonaldisation is related to the bureaucracy described by Max Weber and included in his theory of rationalisation, which G. Ritzer – in the case of McDonaldisation – refers to the formal rationality formulated by this author, understood as “laws, regulations, and broader social structures that

(unlike Max Weber, who positively assesses bureaucracy through the paradigm of formal rationality), sees its significant shortcomings. These include, among other shortcomings, the dehumanisation of the client and employee, the decreasing effectiveness of bureaucracy, or the *iron cage of rationality* which is an expression of stripping a person of his humanity.¹⁶ With regard to the McDonaldisation of universities, one can also fear that the client (student) and the employee may be dehumanised. This process may be contributed by the mass of university education, which is manifested in the efforts of universities to increase the number of students (which may be the result of, for example, the financing system of universities, one of the elements of which was the number of students). Such dehumanisation is a contradiction of the academic ethos, in which the quality of science and a good relationship between the professor and the mentee are important. It seems that one of the main threats related to the McDonaldisation of universities may be the pursuit by these organisations, similarly to economic entities, of mainly making a profit, especially in the situation of insufficient financing from public funds. This is confirmed, for example, by studies carried out in Nigeria, where the privatisation of universities has led to such negative consequences as, for example, the desire to educate students, at the expense of the deterioration of the quality of the teaching process, or employing part-time lecturers with insufficient qualifications.¹⁷ Undoubtedly, McDonaldisation is a phenomenon that also translates into other non-economic forms of social life, including the functioning of universities, which means that also in this area there are typical features of this process, such as dehumanisation or (analysed below) economisation. Consequently, market methods are translated into other aspects of the functioning of society. However, one may wonder whether such a marketisation of universities does not de facto contradict their essence, which is expressed by the academic ethos. In order to answer this question, one should refer to the phenomenon of economisation and financialisation of science.

instruct people how to find the optimal means to achieve a given goal". Ritzer, *Macdonaldyzacja*, 48. M. Weber pointed out that the formal rationality of economic activity can be described as a degree of calculation that is technologically possible to achieve within the scope of the currently implemented activity. Max Weber, *Economy and Society. A New Translation* (London: Harvard University Press, 2019), 172.

¹⁶ Ritzer, *Macdonaldyzacja*, 49–53.

¹⁷ Emeka W. Dumbili, "McDonaldization of Nigerian Universities: A Sociological Analysis and Critique of Engendering Policies", access 30.09.2021, <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/2158244014529780>, s. 1–14.

3. Economisation and financialisation of science – that is the implementation of market methods to science and their consequences

At the beginning, it is necessary to briefly characterise both concepts, i.e. economisation and financialisation, in order to consider how both these processes affect science, especially universities, their organisation, functioning, and their influence on the academic ethos.

In the lexical sense, economising means *making more economical, thrifty*.¹⁸ The lexical concept of economisation refers to the understanding of this concept on the basis of economic sciences relating to economically rational action.¹⁹ The lexical meaning of the economic phrase, on the other hand, is “referring to (political) or economics; concerning economy, economic”.²⁰ Economics is defined, inter alia, as “the science of how people deal with scarcity – the lack of limitless availability of goods, how they solve the acute problem of allocating scarce resources to satisfy competing urges, to satisfy as much as is possible in a given situation”.²¹ Thus, it can be concluded that economisation refers to the application of the principles of economically rational action in various socio-economic areas.²² In the case of the economisation of science, this process may mean the application of the rules of economic rationality in science, especially at universities. In practice, however, it may turn out to be difficult, owing, not only to the specific nature of universities, which are not typical economic entities

¹⁸ *Słownik języka polskiego*, vol. 1, ed. Mieczysław Szymczak (Warszawa: PWN, 1978), 522.

¹⁹ See more: Krystyna Nizioł, “Ekonomizacja prawa finansowego, prawa podatkowego i prawa konkurencji – ogólna charakterystyka”, in: Krystyna Nizioł, Michał Peno, *Ekonomiczna analiza prawa publicznego – problemy, konteksty, zastosowania* (Szczecin: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Uniwersytetu Szczecińskiego, 2019), 85–92.

²⁰ *Słownik języka polskiego*, 521.

²¹ Dawid R. Kamerschen, Richard B. McKenzie, Clark Nardinelli, *Ekonomia* (Gdańsk: Wydawnictwo Fundacji NSZZ “Solidarność”, 1993), S-3.

²² Therefore, economics tries to solve the problem of rational management of resources (the amount of which is necessary to meet human needs), taking into account their alternative applications. Tadeusz Włudyka, Marcin Smaga, “Definicja ekonomii”, in: *Instytucje gospodarki rynkowej*, eds. Tadeusz Włudyka, Marcin Smaga (Warszawa: Wolters Kluwer Polska, 2012), 17. In this sense, it is necessary to refer to rational action in the sense of praxeology, i.e. action based on a logical, rational assessment of phenomena and rules of conduct. Stefan Krajewski, Roman Milewski, “Podstawowe koncepcje i przedmiot ekonomii”, in: *Podstawy ekonomii*, eds. Roman Milewski, Eugeniusz Kwiatkowski (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, 2005), 23.

(such as enterprises), but also because in the economic sciences efficiency is a difficult concept to define. Referring to the lexical concept of economic efficiency, according to which it is “the relation of the effect to the input of a factor of production or a set of factors of production”,²³ it is evident that such economic concepts as effect and input are of significant importance here. This is reflected in the understanding of economic efficiency in the economic sciences, because it usually refers to the principle of rational management (i.e. either maximising the effects or minimising inputs).²⁴

Thus, the essence of economic efficiency relates to inputs and effects (results, benefits), and its unit of measurement is money. Economic efficiency is also the basic determinant of management, and therefore it is related to the achievement of benefits from business activity. It should be noted here that universities are not entities whose primary goal is to conduct business.²⁵ This is confirmed by the analysis of Art. 11 sec. 1 of the Act of July 28, 2018, Law on Higher Education and Science,²⁶ which lists the basic tasks of the university. These include, among others, conducting education at university, postgraduate studies or other forms of education, conducting scientific activity, providing research services and transferring knowledge and technology to the economy, conducting doctoral education, educating and promoting university staff, creating conditions for disabled people to fully participate in the process of admission to a university for the purpose of education, training, conducting research, educating students in a sense of responsibility to the Polish state, national tradition, strengthening the principles of democracy and respecting human rights, creating conditions for the development of students’ physical culture, disseminating and multiplying the achievements of science and culture, including by gathering and making available library, information, and archival collections, as well as by acting for the benefit of local and regional communities. Even a cursory analysis of the university’s catalogue of tasks

²³ “Słownik PWN”, access 30.09.2021, <https://encyklopedia.pwn.pl/haslo/efektywnosc-ekonomiczna;3896625.html>.

²⁴ Anna Rutkowska, “Teoretyczne aspekty efektywności – pojęcie i metody pomiaru”, *Zarządzanie i Finanse* 1.4 (2013): 440.

²⁵ Eryk Głodziński, “Efektywność ekonomiczna – dylematy definiowania i pomiaru”, *Żeszyty Naukowe. Organizacja i Zarządzanie. Silesian University of Technology* 73 (2014): 158–167 and the literature cited therein. The factor that distinguishes management efficiency from economic efficiency is the fact that management efficiency is measurable (in terms of value/quantity) and immeasurable. On the other hand, economic efficiency “is a fully measurable category, describing the economic situation of an organization”, *ibidem*.

²⁶ Journal of Laws of 2021 item 478 as amended.

allows us to conclude that these organisations have a specific, significant role, for example, in research, didactic, and educational processes.

Another of the analysed processes – financialisation – is related to the global economy and also has an economic and social dimension. Financialisation is related to the growing importance of the financial sphere and financial criteria in socio-economic life. In the narrow sense, financialisation is the gradual gaining of advantage of the financial sphere over the real sphere of the economy. On the other hand, in a broad sense, this process means an increase in the importance of financial activities in the activities of business entities not related to financial services.²⁷

For example, E. Gostomski defines financing as “the process of increasing the influence of financial markets and financial elites on the economic policy of governments and the functioning of enterprises, as well as on social life in highly developed countries”.²⁸ The literature lists both the general and specific causes of this phenomenon. For example, the general causes of financing include changes in the structure and operation of financial markets, solutions in the field of socio-economic policy, and changes in the behaviour of non-financial enterprises. Within each of these general causes, specific causes of this process can be distinguished. By way of example, it can be pointed out that within the framework of socio-economic policy, the special cause of financialisation is, among others, forcing the concept of a limited state (by departing from the doctrine of the welfare state and state interventionism, deregulation), or supporting the flexibility of the labour market (by weakening the role of trade unions, and limitation of the minimum wage, unemployment benefits, and employment protection).²⁹ The literature also indicates that the consequence of financialisation are changes in the sphere of management and ownership of economic entities, which lead, for example, to preferring short-term profitability to the long-term development of a given project. Financialisation can also be considered as an expression of specific historical processes related to socio-economic innovation, which is money.³⁰

²⁷ Marek Ratajczak, “Ekonomia i edukacja ekonomiczna w dobie finansyzacji gospodarki”, *Ekonomista* 3 (2014): 207–208 and the literature quoted therein.

²⁸ Eugeniusz Gostomski, “Finansyzacja w gospodarce światowej”, *International Business and Global Economy* 33 (2014): 300.

²⁹ Grzegorz Gołębiowski, Piotr Szczepankowski, “Finansyzacja gospodarki krajów Europy Środkowo-Wschodniej”, *Ruch Prawniczy, Ekonomiczny i Socjologiczny* 5 (2015): 201.

³⁰ Ratajczak, “Ekonomia i edukacja”: 208–209. “Subsequent innovations in the sphere of finance and money undoubtedly contributed to the development of the

Both processes described above have a clear economic dimension. It seems, however, that the phenomenon of economisation related to the functioning of universities and the scientific activity undertaken in them should be limited only to typical transactions in which economic rationality is important. It is justified because each organisation, including universities, operates in specific economic realities, which, in practice, set the framework for their functioning in terms of finances, and the use of personal and material resources in the scientific and didactic process. For example, when evaluating certain research procedures or purchasing research infrastructure (characteristic of research in science), an economically rational approach should be used, but it should not always be a decisive criterion for commencing specific research. It is a complex and multi-threaded topic, because it depends on the type of research (exact sciences, social sciences, etc.), the requirements related to, for example, financial outlays for it, the possibility of cooperation with the economic environment, the availability of research grants, or the participation of external entities in funding this research. As a consequence, the importance of making decisions taking into account the criteria of economic efficiency may also be different. Undoubtedly, it should be taken into account in the course of the activities of universities, but it should not be the only criterion for taking decisions. Universities are not typical economic units, and their goals go beyond typically economic goals (which is mainly profit maximisation).

4. Determinants of McDonaldisation of universities (selected examples)

The individual determinants of McDonaldisation can be illustrated with selected examples related to the activities of universities.

The first of them – efficiency – in relation to universities – can be defined in a general sense as *bringing (desired) effects*.³¹ Usually, its measurement is carried out by means of, inter alia, ratio analysis (to assess the financial condition), parametric, and non-parametric methods (i.e. those in which the input-output relationship is not determined). In practice, however, researching the effectiveness of universities raises many practical

economy and society, but at the same time they create various threats related to the autonomy of money in relation to phenomena in the real sphere”, *ibidem*: 209.

³¹ Joanna Wolszczak-Derlacz, *Efektywność i produktywność szkół wyższych. Raport IV* (Poznań: Centrum Studiów nad Polityką Publiczną UAM, 2019), 7.

problems, because it is impossible to clearly define the results of their activities.³² The most frequently used measures of outlays and outcomes for this purpose are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Measures of expenditures and performance of universities

Outlays	Results
Number of employees (academic teachers and non-academic staff, broken down by grades and positions)	Bibliometric data: number of publications of employees with affiliation of a given university, citation rates, impact indicators
Number of teaching hours performed by academic teachers	Number of awarded academic degrees and titles
Financial resources: the value of revenues broken down into sources, costs: broken down into forms of incurring, assets	Number of graduates (number of bachelor's, engineer's and master's diplomas)
Local conditions, e.g. the area of laboratories	Number of students (e.g. moving to higher years, obtaining a given number of ECTS credits)
	Results of tests and exams, e.g. results of graduation exams, diploma grades
	Indicators concerning the employment of graduates or the preferences of employers
	Patents, industrial designs
	Number and value of contracts with external entities
	The amount of funds obtained for scientific activities from external sources. Value of research services sold

Source: Joanna Wolszczak-Derlacz, *Efektywność i produktywność szkół wyższych. Raport IV* (Poznań: Centrum Studiów nad Polityką Publiczną UAM, 2019), 12.

Most often, the effectiveness of universities is assessed using quantitative methods, such as, for example, measuring the effects of scientific research by the number of publications, or the effects of educating students

³² Ibidem, 18–26, 40.

by the number of graduates.³³ The Data Envelopment Analysis method is also used.³⁴

Another of the determinants of McDonaldisation – the quantitative nature of services – can be applied to both research and teaching activities. The growing influence of market processes on science means that the emphasis is placed on creating economic benefits (valorisation), also in the case of research financed from public sources. For example, the number of patents, licence agreements, and the number of publications “produced” by a university are assessed.³⁵ In addition, the use of such economic parameters means that for some students it is not important for the quality of the educational service, but only that the requirements for receiving it are low.³⁶ Thus, the student apparently receives an educational service that should guarantee a certain level of education, which makes him feel “abundant” in the form of continuing his studies and completing them, which, however, is not associated with an increase in his general knowledge.

The next determinant of McDonaldisation – predictability – in its essence assumes the standardisation of, for example, certain procedures. An example is the professionalisation of university management processes, which is treated as an organisational system. The literature indicates that this process and its associated “transformation of the academic culture into the culture of control, results in a departure from trust in the employee towards mechanisms of motivation and control. Such an approach is to contribute to increasing the effectiveness of the new university management system, but at the same time causes the loss of a specific academic ethos based on self-regulation”.³⁷ Thus, the implemented motivation schemes (e.g. financial ones related to publishing in better-scored magazines) or control schemes (e.g. frequent periodic inspections of employees) make

³³ Ibidem, 40.

³⁴ See Joanna Wolszczak-Derlacz, “Analiza efektywności działalności uczelni europejskich i amerykańskich – podejście nieparametryczne”, *Ekonomista* 40 (2015): 109–130.

³⁵ Jan Polcyn, *Edukacja jako dobro publiczne – próba kwantyfikacji* (Piła: Wydawnictwo Wyższej Szkoły Zawodowej w Piile, 2017), 52–53.

³⁶ See Grzegorz Zieliński, Kajetan Lewandowski, “Determinanty percepcji jakości usług edukacyjnych w perspektywie grup interesariuszy”, *Zarządzanie i Finanse* 3 (2012): 48–50.

³⁷ Łukasz Sułkowski, Robert Seliga, “Profesjonalizacja zarządzania uczelniami w Polsce”, in: *Transformacja akademickiego szkolnictwa wyższego w Polsce w okresie 30-lecia 1989–2019*, ed. Jerzy Woźnicki (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Politechniki Warszawskiej, 2019), 302.

the university resemble an organization similar to a corporation, in which such an element as the academic ethos is not important.

Another determinant of McDonaldisation, i.e. the possibility of manipulation concerning the replacement of human work with technology without human participation, is a kind of development of the processes. This feature is most fully manifested in the digitisation of universities. This process raises many challenges concerning, for example, didactic processes. Currently, educational services can be provided by various organisations. Their recipients – young people – are commonly digitised, expect a quick transfer of knowledge through various contact channels with lecturers, including digital, multimedia, or learning via social media.³⁸ As previously mentioned, the process of digitisation of universities increased even more during the pandemic.

Of course, the above the examples do not exhaust the issue of the McDonaldisation of universities. A different approach to aspects of this process in conjunction with academic values is shown in Table 2.

Table 2. McDonaldisation aspects in higher education that threaten academic values

Aspect	Characteristic	Academic values at risk
Efficiency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – quick transition from ignorance to higher education – standardisation and simplification of education (scripts, presentations, teaching materials) – higher education as “fast consumption” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – {truth?}true – responsibility – reliability – honesty
Measurability (calculativeness)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – effectiveness of teaching activities converted into class hours – ECTS points as a manifestation of standardisation – parametrisation of scientific units and mass scientific works not always resulting from scientific curiosity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – reliability – loyalty – honesty – the freedom of scientists – freedom of study

³⁸ Grzegorz Mazurek, “Transformacja cyfrowa – perspektywa instytucji szkolnictwa wyższego”, in: *Transformacja akademickiego szkolnictwa wyższego*, 316–317.

Aspect	Characteristic	Academic values at risk
Predictability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – routine work of academic teachers (administrative McDonaldisation) – paying fees for studies for which the student receives a diploma 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – reliability – loyalty – honesty – the freedom of scientists – freedom of study
Control	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – student-client demanding quick service and lowering the education discipline 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – truth – honesty – justice

Source: Angelika Pabian, "Ukierunkowana rynkowo uczelnia w kontekście zagrożeń wynikających z procesu mcdonaldyzacji", *Handel Wewnętrzny* 1 (2017): 46.

The information included in Table 2 shows that each of the aspects of McDonaldisation included in it poses a threat to certain academic values, including reliability, honesty, and truth. McDonaldisation encourages universities to operate efficiently (e.g. simplifying education – the quality of the educational service does not count, but the number of students), according to uniform standards (e.g. ECTS points or university parameterisation), predictable (an academic teacher performs routine activities, e.g. completes syllabuses). This makes universities more and more resemble organisations similar to corporations, in which values such as reliability, truth, honesty, and freedom in the teaching and research process are unfortunately lost.

Final remarks

The aim of this study was to try to answer the following research questions: first, what are the

consequences for universities of their economisation and financialisation, and, second, how the McDonaldisation of universities can affect the academic ethos.

Answering the first research question, the following conclusions can be made. Undoubtedly, the ongoing process of economisation of various socio-economic areas also intensively affects universities. Unfortunately, one can risk a statement that this process may dominate the functioning

of universities, because the legislator will, applying normative rigours, enforce specific results of the university's operation (related, for example, to the results of their parameterisation). This process is already visible. The progressing economisation of all spheres of the university's functioning may have negative consequences, the essence of which will be reduced to the perception of a university only as an economic entity providing specific educational services (in accordance with the needs of the market), and scientists will become mainly service providers providing services dictated by the needs of the market (educational and scientific). Apart from this sphere, there is general research which – as described earlier in connection with the academic ethos – should meet criteria, not necessarily related to economic efficiency. On the one hand, when referring to financialisation, it can be stated that its impact on universities is not so direct, because this phenomenon is mainly related to the separation of the financial sphere from the real economy. On the other hand, what is noticeable in this respect may be the minimisation of the role of the state in the activities of universities and, in a way, inducing them to obtain additional funding from sources external to the state budget. Nevertheless, it seems that currently the functioning of universities may be more influenced by the process of economisation than financialisation. Unfortunately, this process is the main threat to the academic ethos today. The automatic application of elements of the market mechanism related to demand, supply, and market price for the operation of a non-economic organisation, such as a university, can largely negate the above-mentioned elements of the academic ethos, which should be a determinant of the functioning of universities.

Answering the second research question on how the McDonaldisation of universities can affect the academic ethos, the following conclusions can be made. It can be concluded that McDonaldisation may currently have a significant impact on the functioning of universities. The reason for this is not only the COVID-19 pandemic, but also the attractiveness of McDonaldisation itself in terms of the market. It provides, on the one hand, a certain, standard level of educational services that may be attractive to potential students and universities, and which minimise the requirements for the teaching process. On the other hand, the process of McDonaldisation may be attractive for universities owing to the exemplary potential benefits, such as an increase in the number of students (which may be the result of McDonaldisation, and thus unified, educational services), and an increase in the employer's control over research and teaching employees (which in turn, it may be the result of an increase in the use of technology and artificial intelligence in the teaching process).

Times are turbulent now, not only owing to the COVID-19 pandemic, but also to the globalisation of economic processes that has been going on for many years. It is a multifaceted phenomenon, as it concerns not only the processes usually associated with the economy, but also has a social dimension, which is evident, for example, in the example of McDonaldisation. Certainly, the requirement to use the economic criterion to assess effectiveness is taken into account in the functioning of various organisations, including universities. Without denying the necessity to use the criterion of economic rationality in the activities of the university, it cannot, however, be the dominant and the only criterion. The university, if only because of its historical origins, cannot be equated with a typical economic organisation whose main goal is to maximise profit. If we look at the university only through the prism of its implementation of the principle of economic efficiency, then we will completely lose the academic ethos. Of course, with certain transactions, such as investments, the application of the principle of economic efficiency and the comparison of inputs and effects is justified, but taking into account the overall tasks of the university, this principle cannot apply to all areas of its activity. University is not an entrepreneur, but a center that has much broader goals and a spectrum of impact, it is also supposed to refer to the academic ethos, which in practice determines its specificity. If economic criteria prevail over the academic ethos, the idea of a university that will be reduced to an economic unit competing with other entrepreneurs in the market for clients/students may be lost.

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Summary

Historically, universities not only played an educational and research role, but also created culture. It was also expressed by the academic ethos. At the same time, along with the advancement of the globalisation of economic processes, there is a tendency to apply the market approach in their case, which results in the economisation and financialisation of science. The clash of these two worlds, i.e. the academic ethos embedded in academic values and the economic approach to the functions of universities, is manifested, for example, in their McDonaldisation. As a consequence, universities focus on those aspects of their activities that are economically effective, including, for example, providing specialised educational services for student – clients. This process may result in universities losing their character, and thus becoming centres of creative inspiration and scientific discourse between scientists. Therefore, the aim of this study is to try to answer the following research questions: first, what are the consequences for universities of their economisation and financialisation, and, second, how their McDonaldisation affects the academic ethos. The study uses the dogmatic, legal and comparative methods.

Keywords: academic ethos, McDonaldisation of universities, economisation, financialisation