

## **Dean's Competencies after the Transformation in Poland (0224)**

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### **Abstract**

The aim of the paper is to underline the problem of competencies of the dean in higher education in Poland. Based on Polish reality the authors designed and conducted pilotage research among the deans at the top Polish universities. The results of the research will support building specific model of competencies for managers in higher education in Poland. The proposed model of the dean's competencies will consist of three areas: expectations, possibilities and intentions, that are described below.

The paper will provide specific model for the dean's competencies based on the research conducted among deans in colleges and universities in large cities in Poland. The authors started the research at the beginning of 2009 and plan to show the first results in the paper. They hope, that the findings will help to design appropriate and comprehensive training program especially for deans that will help them to develop necessary competencies.

### **Introduction**

Higher Education in Poland has experienced tremendous transformation since 1989, when the political system and economy has changed. Moreover, 15 years later Poland joined the EU opened its education market and took part in creation of the common territory, which resulted in rising many private colleges and universities (301 nonpublic and 126 public). Those changes and high competency on the education market forced national Polish universities to managing them in accordance with the economic roles. Due to the political and economic system higher education in Poland was financed by the government before that time. Therefore, natural effects of that situation were the modification of the dean's role in higher education and transformation from the administrative role to managerial one. The requirements of the dean's role are completely different now then they were 20 or even 10 years ago. Today, the dean should be not only an appreciate scholar but most of all professional manager who characterizes with high competencies. Such situation seems to be very beneficial to the educational system in Poland but there is also a problem connected with the lack of adequate trainings and help in completion of the skills. Trainings that should be a response on the occurred changes and needs of the deans and would be comprehensive and adequate program addressed strictly to this group of people. Furthermore, there is no research that would examine what are the expectations of the deans and the market and how the programs should be designed. The authors conducted pilotage research among the deans at the Jagiellonian University in Krakow. The results shows, that most of the deans develop their skills and take part in some kind of trainings and specific postgraduate studies from management. However, most of the programs are addressed simply to managers not to the managers in higher education. The aim of the paper is to design specific model for the dean's competencies based on the research conducted among deans in colleges and universities in cities in Poland (Krakow, Warsaw, Wroclaw). The authors started the research at the beginning of 2009 and plan to show the first results on the paper. They hope, that the findings will help to design appropriate training program especially for deans that will help them to develop necessary competencies.

## Literature review

There are many considerations about “competencies” in the literature and the authors often propose their own definitions, classification or different ways of diagnosis (for example: Whiddett S., Hollyforde S., 2003, Woodruffe Ch., 2003). According to the Thierry and Sauret, competencies in general mean the employee ability to take appropriate action that will lead to achieving intentioned goals in specific conditions and through given instruments. More complex definition underlines that competencies consist of the knowledge, experience, skills, attitudes and the willingness of the employee to act in specific environment and conditions, as well as, the ability to adopt to the changeable conditions. Therefore the competencies are not the synonym of formal education or diploma (Thierry D. And Sauret C, 1994). Walkowiak summarizes the definition by presenting the components of competencies, which are as follow: knowledge, experience, skills, personal features, attitudes and behaviors that guide to realize specific goals (Walkowiak, 2007). When talking about dean’s competencies, those goals must be defined as the short and long term goals of the university or college in changeable environment. In US there have been conducted research on deans roles and competencies for many years (for example: Gould, 1964, Dibden 1968, Griffiths D.E., McCarty 1980, Austin M.J., Ahearn F.L., English R.A., 1997). In Europe one of the first important research on deans role were published by Faccin (Faccin I., Wilkin L., 2007) however, there were much more researchers who were exploring this field (de Boer H, 2009, Montez W.H., Nies J., Charles T.). In Poland higher education went through specific changes therefore, the studies should be conducted specially for this area. In fact, there are many publications that explore competencies of managers at different levels (Jedrych E., 2007, Oleksyn T., 2006, Wiczorek J., 2007, Moczydlowska J., 2008, Rakowska A., Sitko-Lutek A., 2000). There are also works that characterize competencies of academic teachers at Polish universities (Strykowski W., Strykowska J., Pielachowski J., 2003, Zajac m., Zawisza W., 2006, Blaszczyk K., Drzewowski M., Maliszewski W.J., 2009). Although, it is difficult to find any publications that treats about deans, deans competencies or competencies of high level managers in higher education. Therefore, there is a need for such research. The aim of this paper is to conduct appropriate research among deans in the largest Polish academic centers that will fulfill this niche.

## Deans in Poland – current situation

In higher education in Poland deans are appointed according to the specific law act (Higher Education law Act, from 27 of July 2005), as well as, specific internal regulations of the college or university. Main duties at this post are also specified in those documents, for example: the dean is responsible for managing and budgeting functions and the dean needs to balance the traditional role of the academic personnel protection with the strong managerial role (Statute of chosen university – SGGW in Warsaw, Poland). Simultaneously the dean is also the academic teacher, who is responsible for educating and training students, conducting research and developing scientific activities. Moreover it should take part in most organizational work of the school and training their personnel (Higher Education Law Act, from 27 of July 2005). Deans as the managers of the independent education unit should (Statut of the Jagiellonian Univeristy):

- Represent the unit outside of the unit,
- Make decisions connected with the property and administration of the unit,
- Supervise the teaching and research process conducted at the unit,
- Managing of the human resources of the unit,
- Managing of the administrative work of the unit
- Make decisions connected with individual cases of the students.

Ordered collection of those expectations in accordance to dean's competencies is presenting below and authors of this paper will build their model based on this classification. According to Maliszewski the competencies of the dean can be divided into (Maliszewski W.J., 2009):

- Based competencies, for example: problem solving, flexible thinking, negotiating skills, relations with coworkers, international manners, being proactive, stress managing, effectiveness, commitment, good work organization, decision making.
- Executive competencies, for example: good orientation in the situation of the higher education and science, identification with the unit, good attitude toward students, organizational efficiency, knowledge, openness toward change, team building skills, motivational skills, planning skills, organizational skills, change management skills, process management skills, project managing skills).

Based on the classification, authors of this article, start to build their competencies model for the deans of colleges and universities in Poland. The model is also based on the research that has started in 2009 among deans of the top universities in Poland (f.e. Jagiellonian University, University of Science and Technology in Krakow). Responders were asking to fulfill questionnaire during various type of meetings organized for deans.

The proposed model of the dean's competencies consists of three areas:

- Expectations – competencies which are expected from the individuals who hold the position by various clients (teachers, students, coworkers, etc),
- Possibilities – competencies that are possessed by those individuals,
- Intentions – competencies which should be developed by those individuals because of the goals want to achieve.

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