

Kazimierz Musiał, *Uniwersytet na miarę swego czasu. Transformacja społeczna w dobie postindustrialnej a zmiany w szkolnictwie wyższym krajów nordyckich*. Gdańsk: słowo/obraz terytoria, 2013, 376 p.

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Short summary of the book: *University in the frame of its times.*

Higher education is still regarded as public good in most countries of the world, although the doubts relating to the optimum pattern of its contribution to the socio-economic development arise. They make it expedient to pay ever greater attention to the social and economic accountability in relation to the achieved results. Ever more often it also leads to claims that the university level education should become cheaper, more efficient, more competitive and responding to the real economic and social needs.

Against such a diagnosis of the current comprehension of the role of university in the society, the main research goal of the book is to determine, provide evidence and analyse the inseparable dependency between changes taking place in higher education of the Nordic countries in a given period, and the social transformation that conditions them and provides them with legitimacy. Arguably, current transformation is characterized by an advancing

renegotiation of the social contract and change of the welfare state model, which eventually results in public policy reforms.

The research agenda is pursued by a comparative analysis of institutional solutions in the welfare state system, the public policy and in the higher education sector. In the past decades all these domains have been reinvented and legitimized in the public sector modernization discourses in each Nordic country. The analysis covers not only institutions that are subjects and objects of the public policy and regional policy, but also national discourses about socially the most relevant and organizationally the most optimal model of relationship between higher education sector and the society. The higher education that is constituted within the public discourse gets institutionalised in a specific social and political temporal frame, thanks to which it becomes an institution – as put in the title of the book – in the frame of its times.

Among many conclusions stemming from the provided descriptions and analyses, it is worth underlining that change in higher education should be viewed as a result of the evolution concerning the nature and character of the nation state. Another important issue is how Nordics manage to match the Humboldtian ideals with the conditions stemming from economic efficiency. The third important issue concerns the hybrid steering of institutions in higher education, which possibly can be explained within the category of autopoietic change taking place in higher education systems.

Key words:

Scandinavia, Nordic region, comparative educational research, higher education reforms, public policy reforms