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### **LEGAL EDUCATION IN THE REPUBLIC OF POLAND**

Legal education is one of a very few fields of studies which departed from a stage-oriented assumptions of the Bologna Process and it constitutes a uniform five-year study program classified as the long-cycle one that is open to applicants holding a secondary school leaving certificate, providing specialist knowledge in a specific area of study as well as preparing for creative work in a profession. Graduates are granted master level titles (magister) based on the completion of the curriculum and final diploma examination where students defend their master thesis [1].

Legal changes affecting access to education expanded the number of students entering Polish universities. Graduates from high schools directly enter Polish universities. Most majors are divided into two stages: a three-year first degree program, aimed to obtain a “licencjat” degree, which is the equivalent of the U.S. bachelor degree, and a two-year second degree program, aimed to obtain a master’s degree. There are a few majors for which programs are not divided. These include law, medicine, architecture, and psychology. Students in these majors follow a uniform five year study program. According to Izabela Krasnicka, new regulations have opened the legal profession to allow more law graduates to gain a license to practice, and beginning October 1, 2011, the most recent overhaul of the law on higher education was implemented [2, p. 692].

There are two types of law schools in Poland: the first group includes Law Faculties at public universities (as of October 2011, a total of fifteen state and one church universities offer law degree programs), and the second group includes private schools, which opened law majors within their educational offering (as of November 2011, there are twenty-three private HEIs offering law degree programs) [3].

Many of law students want to become an attorney. The profession of an attorney at law is a profession of public trust and is organised within the professional bar according to the Act of the Polish Parliament under the authority of the Polish Constitution with the aim to protect public interest. The profession of an attorney at law is one of the legal professions recognised in Directive 249/77/EEC on temporary provision of legal services in another EU Member State and Directive 98/5/EC on permanent provision of legal services in another EU Member State. The aim of the activities of attorneys at law is to provide legal services and legal assistance to individuals and legal entities, in particular by providing legal advice, preparing legal opinions, drafting legislative proposals and representing clients before courts and public bodies as a legal representative or a defence counsel, including before the Supreme Court, Constitutional Tribunal, Supreme Administrative Court, the Court of Justice of the European Union and the European Court of Human Rights [4].

To understand legal education in Poland, it is useful to analyze its methodological side. Methodology of legal education in Poland is mostly focused on the theoretical aspects of law and understanding of mechanisms functioning in the different legal disciplines. The idea is to dedicate law school years to theoretical training. A minimum of three weeks of internship is required during the five years of law school, but, in practice, the requirement does not exceed four to five weeks in every school. Statutory standards require that approximately one-third of the teaching hours should not be taught in the form of lectures. For each main course, therefore, students attend a “lecture” (conducted usually by the leading professor in the particular Department) that is open to all the students at a given year and is not obligatory. During the lecture, students listen and take notes, no discussion or questions are allowed. For the same course, a “class” is provided. In classes, students work in groups of twenty to thirty and, as a rule, during the class more interactive methods are used. In practice, however, classes are often dedicated to the further explanation of the problems discussed during the lecture [2, p. 698].

Most popular teaching methods at Polish law schools include: lectures (nowadays, also with power point presentations), class discussions, working with codes and legal acts (not so often with court judgments). It must be emphasized however, that the situation, at least in some law schools, has been improved as more new teaching techniques are introduced and students have a chance to participate in moot court simulations, workshops on legal analysis and legal writing etc. A lot of credit in this respect goes to the legal clinics

where new ideas are widely and successfully implemented to make sure law graduates leave the school with some practical preparation for their future profession [1].

Very often, a law graduate who enters an apprenticeship program is immediately dropped into the deep waters of “real” legal problems, and purely theoretical preparation is of no use in the very non-theoretical situations. Polish law students learn codes and laws. They work on cases, but the analysis of case law is not a popular method. It partly results from the fact that in Poland, as in civil law countries, court judgments do not constitute any source of law. The judgments, however, play an important role and shape the understanding of legal norms, so students should learn the practical skill of using case law in their future work. Statutory standards also provide for basic information on the content of each course. They do not recommend any methods of teaching but, as a rule, not a lot of time can be dedicated to practical skills training. Law schools in Poland find ways to introduce other teaching methods in their programs and widely use American examples. The dynamic growth of legal clinics functioning at Polish law schools serve as the best examples [2, p. 698-699].

As we can admit, legal education in Poland is on the stage of its improvement. According to modern changes in the world, this type of higher education is under influence of the Europe Union and the United States trends and standards of higher legal education.

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