ROCZNIK LUBUSKI Том 47, cz. 1, 2021 ISSN 0485-3083

**DOI:** https://doi.org/10.34768/rl.2021.v471.13

**Agnieszka Szplit***
Jan Kochanowski University of Kielce
ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5756-6393
e-mail: agnieszka.szplit@gmail.com

# PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF ACADEMIC TEACHERS IN THE AUDIT CULTURE

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF ACADEMIC TEACHERS IN THE AUDIT CULTURE

**Keywords:** audit culture, teachers' performance assessment, teacher educators, teacher educators' professional development.

Current problems in education include excessive bureaucracy and the need to develop tools to measure the effectiveness of teaching and scientific development. This is evidenced by the measurement procedures commonly implemented for quality of education and constant checking the implementation of intended activities. The pedagogical literature uses terms such as "audit society" or "audit culture" to describe these trends. The paper analyses this situation, which can also be observed in the Polish educational system, based on qualitative research conducted among teacher educators. It presents the activities of teacher educators who fulfill the audit requirements or undertake activities that do not correlate with the imposed development criteria. The paper describes the experiences of teacher educators looking for 'a golden means' and the actions they take to find a balance between bureaucratic criteria for assessing their professional

* **Agnieszka Szplit** – Ph. D. in social sciences in pedagogy, associate professor; research interests: pedeutology, teacher education, language education, early school and pre-school education.

development and individual preferences or their own vision of academic work.

ROZWÓJ ZAWODOWY NAUCZYCIELI AKADEMICKICH W KULTURZE AUDYTU

**Słowa kluczowe:** kultura audyty, ocena pracy nauczyciela, nauczyciele nauczycieli, rozwój zawodowy nauczycieli.

Jednym z obecnych problemów edukacji jest jej nadmierne zbiurokratyzowanie i potrzeba określenia stałych miar badających efektywność nauczania czy rozwój naukowy. Świadczą o tym powszechnie wdrażane procedury mierzenia jakości kształcenia i sprawdzania realizacji zamierzonych działań. Na określenie tych trendów w literaturze pedagogicznej pojawiają się zatem takie terminy jak „społeczeństwo audytu" czy „kultura audytu". Artykuł charakteryzuje ten trend, pojawiający się również w polskiej edukacji, w oparciu o badania jakościowe przeprowadzone wśród nauczycieli akademickich specjalizujących się w kształceniu nauczycieli. Wskazuje działania nauczycieli akademickich poddających się audytowi lub podejmujących działania nie korelujące z narzucanymi kryteriami rozwoju. Opisuję doświadczenia nauczycieli poszukujących „złotego środka" i podejmowane przez nich działania w celu odnalezienia równowagi pomiędzy biurokratycznymi kryteriami oceny ich rozwoju zawodowego a indywidualnymi preferencjami i wizją pracy akademickiej.

## Introduction

One of the current problems of education is its excessive bureaucracy and a need for constant measurement of effectiveness of teaching and scientific development. This is evidenced by the commonly implemented procedures for measuring the quality of education and checking performance of intended activities. To describe these trends, the literature uses terms such as an 'audit society' or 'audit culture' (Power 1999, Strathern 2000). The term 'audit culture' refers to "contexts in which the techniques and values of accountancy have become a central organizing principle in the governance and management of human conduct – and the new kinds of relationships, habits and practices that this is creating" (Groundwater-Smith, Sachs 2002, p. 279). Audit causes changes in the way people perceive themselves and start measuring themselves against external checklists, performance

indicators or ratings. Modern universities operate like corporate enterprises whose primary concerns are audits, performance indicators and the quality of scientific achievement review.

Shore and Wright (2000, p. 57) even claim that the current "policy assault on teachers through various forms of 'coercive accountability". The dubious accountability requirements force schools to operate more like businesses and quasi-markets. The mentality of the audit culture is accompanied by 'tyranny of transparency' (Strathern 2000, p. 309) that expects objective measurement criteria and standardized procedures of teacher performance assessment. Apple (2007, p.7) claims that an audit culture requires "the constant production of evidence that you are doing things 'efficiently' and in the 'correct' way". So, academic teachers should always be available for measurement at any time, their work must be quantifiable and consistently evaluated. The audit society requires constant surveillance and inspection, regulation, enforcement and sanctions. It also needs professional practice to be auditable by creating specific performance measures. And finally, it demands self-ordering from professionals, not based upon individual judgement, but upon fulfilling externally imposed rules and commands (Groundwater-Smith, Sachs 2002).

In order to describe the activity of teachers and its functioning, certain terms appear, which Smyth and Shacklock (1998) call the 'official policy discourse'. These include, for example, such terms as efficiency, partnership, collegiality, internationalization, competences, qualifications framework, management strategies, standards, etc. Such other notions as 'marketability', 'efficiency', 'performativity' and 'audit accountability' dominate the political discourse about schools and universities and, at the same time, corrode trust and respect towards teachers. Woods and Jeffrey (2002, p. 94) suggest that control over teachers' work is currently "tighter, largely through the codification and monitoring of processes and practices previously left to teachers' professional judgement". They claim modern education is embedded in the new 'technologies of regulations' (p. 90) and trust is 'diminutive' as it is depersonalized and "invested in processes and abstract systems" (p. 90) but not in people.

## The audit culture at universities

An audit culture may bring several consequences to university culture and teachers. As Shore and Wright (2000) say they might be mostly unintended; however, significantly change the behaviour of teachers and university performance. Universities set new assurance procedures and create monitoring teams. At the same time, teachers and researchers produce a great amount

of records instead of focusing on teaching and doing research (it is referred to as 'audit administrative bloat'). The other consequence of audit procedures is ritualization and redirection of goals, as the main focus is not on how well teachers work but on production of evidentiary documents for assessors. What is more, auditing is intended to be stressful and creates much mistrust towards teachers and pressure on their activities and fulfilment of requirements.

Introduction of national indicators for the assessment of productivity in Polish higher education institutions resulted in a creation of a 'parametric game' (Kulczycki 2017), which describes an approach of researchers focused only on fulfilling the requirements of the research evaluation system. Kulczycki argues that there are two strategies used in the game. The first is called 'impactitis' in which only publications in high Impact Factors journals are accepted and acknowledged by a certain university. The second strategy is 'pointosis' (Kulikowski, Antipow 2020) or 'running for points' (Kulczycki 2017), in which collecting points for scientific publications is the most significant goal of academic work. Kulczycki claims that this strategy is a form of survival strategy as researchers at universities tend to produce many low-quality publications to compensate for the lack of a high-quality one (i.e. having many points) and focus on collecting 'points' instead of on actual excellence. In 2018, the new model of research evaluation was presented in the act on science and higher education that limits the number of publications subject to assessment. Every researcher can submit a limited number of publications, i.e. exactly 4, but due to the fact that they are still assessed by points, the counting-points-approach prevails at universities. And a new ideology appears, i.e. 'grantosis', which is a struggle to obtain scientific grants resulting in some changes of university researchers' activity. Additionally, there is yet another evaluation criterion – assessment of scholarly book publications is introduced next to the evaluation of journal articles (Kulczycki, Korytkowski 2018).

All the above mentioned indicators describe the existing characteristics of researchers' productivity. And despite a high level of institutional autonomy, the majority of universities in Poland adopted the national criteria for the evaluation of individual academics (Kulczycki et al. 2020) and use bureaucratic accounting for the effects of their work.

**Teachers' reaction to changes and an audit culture**

Smyth and Shacklock (1998, p.35) compare teaching to industry and thus mention negative phenomena resulting from the 'forced' activity of the teacher. Those are:

1. specific subjugation of teachers,
2. commodification of learning,
3. routinized teaching,
4. constant surveillance,
5. increased prescriptiveness,
6. increased managerialism.

An audit culture requires a professional teacher to be a person that "meets organizational goals, works efficiently to meet 'one size fit all' benchmarks of student achievement, and documents this process for the accountability of the system" (Sachs 2003, p. 123). Teachers do not respond to reforms and regulations being imposed on them in the same way (Moore, et al. 2002). Groundwater-Smith and Sachs (2002) indicate that there are two responses to the audit society: to act as an entrepreneurial professional – that is, as a careerist, or as an activist professional.

Mahony and Hextall (2000) identify two approaches to systems based on standardization and an audit culture: a regulatory one and a developmental one. Regulatory approaches can be used as a managerialist tool for measuring the efficiency and effectiveness of systems, institutions and individuals. Developmental approaches, on the other hand, provide opportunities for teachers' further professional learning, aimed at improving the quality of their teaching throughout their careers (Mahony, Hextall 2000, p. 31). Thus, formal requirements for teachers' professional development impose a specific method of shaping their careers. Moore, Edwards, Halpin and George (2002) identify two ways in which teachers react to reforms (and an audit culture as well) imposed on them. The first way is drawing eclectically on various educational practices and traditions (the so-called principled pragmatism). The other approach is taking a survival strategy referred to as 'contingent pragmatism'. Woods and Jeffrey (2002) mention a few more ways teachers position themselves; the authors call it 'positioning' (p. 99) in relation to change and political pressure on them. They include (pp. 98-104): going with the flow and protecting oneself by talking it up; refusal or rejection of the new identity; self-assertion and drawing the line around what is considered tolerable; self-displacement that minimizes the worst excesses and harmful effects; game-playing and defending the real self, and, finally, re-alignment, recognizing the tensions, accepting them and getting on without tearing oneself apart. The following section will discuss the reactions that can be seen among teacher educators at universities.

## Research description

The study was conducted in 2018 (Szplit 2019) among 14 foreign language teacher educators working at different universities in Poland. The group was selected by snowball sampling. The research used semi-structured interviews. The findings presented below are based on selected interviews from the collected data. Three cases of teacher educators were chosen; the participants clearly explain their reaction to an auditory culture that encourages compliance with the government policies. Thus, the following part of the paper focuses on three cases only.

## Research findings

Having the above discussion in mind, and based on the research among teacher educators, I can identify three main types of reactions of teachers in face of an audit culture:

1. refusal of an imposed identity,
2. going with the flow,
3. performing a survival strategy.

I chose one teacher educator as a representative of each strategy. I decided to focus on three educators' profiles to describe their attitudes towards an audit culture and their response to redefinition of professionalism as performativity.

*Refusal of an imposed identity (Profile 1 – Anna)*

The interviews with foreign language teacher educators provide several examples of situations in which they refuse to follow the new regulations and to focus on scientific achievements. The educators indicate a subjectively high value of didactic development and ignore the university's publication-related policy. Several respondents claim that legal regulations enforce scientific development, but it is less important to them personally. Anna says that she is not interested in scientific work and research:

*"Strictly scientific development is not my cup of tea, I do not enjoy searching through articles and writing only to get some 'points'." (Anna)*

Anna refused to accept a role of a researcher intentionally, but it could make or break her career. So, she decided to change the form of employment and works as a didactic employee. She emphasises her lack of interest or even reluctance to conduct research and she eagerly focuses on teaching. She was tired after some time devoted to researching.

*"After my doctoral studies, I do not want to write any single paper". (Anna)*

The teacher also emphasizes that she feels a contradiction between her preferences and what reality offers. She has a strong need to make sense of what she does:

*"These tendencies are natural, I have such a [. . . ] strong feeling that what I am doing must make sense. A scientific paper that only an author and a reviewer will read, really makes no sense to me." (Anna)*

Anna does not understand "this obsession with ratings and points" and focuses much more on teaching. She considers it the main purpose of her work, but feels how 'improper' it is in accordance with the university' rules or teacher educator's professional development standards.

*"For me, success is, I am afraid [. . . ] working with students, which is simply a good preparation for the profession [. . . ] In my opinion, this is essential." (Anna)*

She is a good example of a teacher that "is furious at the ways it distracts our attention from what we feel is our 'real' work, and distorts that work by trying to measure it in ridiculously inappropriate ways" (Shore 2008, p. 291).

*Going with the flow (Profile 2 – Mary)*

The necessity to conduct research and to teach at the same time sometimes forces academic teachers to 'neglect' work with students and minimize their effort (Zbróg 2014). Research and teaching work are often "in conflict with each other, because it is very difficult to reconcile good research with good teaching" (Cyboran 2008, p. 75). There is a specific 'competition for time', as Hattie and Marsh (1996) call it in their 'scarcity model'.

The teacher educator, Mary admits:

*"When I was doing my PhD, I had to devote myself to it and now I feel that I failed my classes with students." (Mary)*

This situation results from a stronger emphasis on research and publications than on the development of teachers' teaching competences. This tendency is observed during the evaluation of academic teachers in Poland (Babicka-Wirkus et al. 2015), as well as Europe (Lankveld et al. 2017). Teaching is in a way 'abandoned' due to the lack of time and the possibility of reconciling it with dynamic scientific development, which is the only guarantee of further employment (Zbróg 2014).

Mary feels secure now, but she recalls some of her co-workers who were worried about being made redundant and explains it in such words:

*"If I do not write a few articles during the year, they will throw me out".*

Mary does not worry about her employment but gains also an additional motivation to publish. She says:

*"Writing an article is a habit for me. First, it is a duty. We all have to think about publications. [...] And it's also nice to have more publications than others".*

Mary goes with the flow. She is eager to write and do research, and therefore she regards teaching as a minor activity. As Clarke, Knight and Jarvis (2012) write, a 'hero' is one who publishes a text read by only six people, not a teacher whose students pass the exam with a score of 80-90%. However, Mary is the only person among the target group who is so strongly involved in researching and publishing and neglects teaching. The majority of teacher educators play two roles at the same time.

Survival strategy (Profile 3 – Agnes)

The survival strategy for teacher educators means establishing some different professional roles performed simultaneously. Ducharme (1993) uses the metaphor of a two-faced Janus-head to describe the fact that a teacher educator has more than two faces, while Smith (2011) describes the so-called multi-faceted academic teachers in Norway. Gońckowski (1996) divides scientists on the basis of their participation in the 'theatre of scientific life' (scientific research) or 'the theatre of public enlightenment' (teaching). The author calls the former a learned researcher, the latter a learned teacher.

All those opinions emphasise that teachers perform two roles at the same time. The teacher educators meet the desires of the audit society for externally controlled scientific development and follow the external regulations that privilege corporate over academic modes. Simultaneously, they highly value their teaching practice and persist in their personal beliefs about what it means to "be a good academic teacher".

However, the pedagogical literature describes a specific internal tension among teacher educators resulting from the performance of a double professional role (Coaldrake, Stedman 1999) and unequal treatment of scientific development and didactics in the process of promotion of university staff (Dróżka 2002). Day (1999) argues that, as a result, university teachers are neither 'academics' or 'practitioners'. It may be observed in several narratives that scientific work and didactics are to some extent separate.

Cochran-Smith (2005) emphasizes that there are no moments in the work of a teacher educator when he/she is only a researcher or only a practitioner. Therefore, no aspects of an academic teacher's work should be opposed, such as analysis and action, research and experience, theorizing and undertaking tasks. This assumption goes back to the model developed

by Hattie and Marsh (1996) indicating that the same abilities are needed for research and teaching. These are, for example, commitment to work, the need for continuous development and cognitive curiosity.

Robertson and Bond (2001) also emphasize the close, almost 'symbiotic' relationship between teaching and researching. They also recognize teaching and researching as integral forms of academic work, which complement one another. These opinions are confirmed by the narratives of teacher educators who indicate the mutual interaction between the two areas of their academic activity. However, they emphasize the diverse scope of this relationship in specific stages of their own professional development. Agnes states that she develops in both directions – she becomes a better researcher and a practitioner, but she focuses on different aspects in various moments in her career. During her 19-year-long career, her attitude towards professional development of teachers has been changing at the university. She had other needs too.

*"When I started working as an academic teacher, it was mainly teaching I focused on. I was getting used to work. [. . . ] Later this centre of mass changed a bit and relocated. For example, when it was necessary for me to write a doctorate [. . . ] the priorities had to be changed a bit [. . . ] I must say that research work was a bit dominant then. [. . . ] It was the first half of my work at the university. [. . . ]" (Agnes)*

During the period of induction into the profession, she focused on teaching, but later, she changed her attitude and scientific work now dominates:

*"At the beginning, there were a lot of didactic trainings, but gradually there were fewer and fewer of them, and scientific conferences started to dominate [. . . ] I became more and more involved into scientific work. (Agnes*)

Sajdak (2012) claims, however, that scientific activity and teaching can also complement each other, as they require different competences from an academic teacher. In a group of teacher educators there is a clear interrelation of research and teaching activities. The combination seems to be a survival strategy, as the teachers follow the regulations and redefine their goals for more utilitarian purposes then their personal preferences.

As Agnes says, the main goal of many of her colleagues is to

*"stay at the university. This is such a serious goal; it has such huge significance for many of [the colleagues]" (Agnes)*

Agnes claims that teacher educators consider working at the university to be the most important goal and redirect their activities in order not to lose it.

## Conclusions

Teacher educators in Poland are now given a new economic mission, not developing teacher education and research, but increasing universities' competitiveness. It results in a change of their professionalism and sets it within an economic and performative framework. Academic teachers' assessment standards are about accountability and represent a dimension of the audit society and, through their processes, create and sustain audit cultures. These standards are imposed and used by the government as regulatory frameworks and bureaucratic controls over academic teachers. They become a form of regulation, dictating and standardizing professional practice; in some cases removing the ability of teacher educators to be creative and innovative. Teacher educators react differently to an audit culture and a discourse of performativity that privileges measurable outcome goals and overemphasizes accountability of teacher educators' work.

There is some acceptance of the performative discourse among teacher educators, but there is also some resistance towards it. What dominates is the survival strategy, as teacher educators try to cope with the challenges they face and are ready to redefine their goals and rearrange their professional activities. They struggle with the requirements formulated by the university and their own notions of teacher educator's professionalism.

## Literatura | References

Apple M. W. (2004), Schooling, markets, and an audit culture, "Critical Quarterly", 47(1-2), pp. 11-33.

Babicka-Wirkus A., Pasikowski S., Szplit A. (2015), Ocena okresowa nauczyciela akademickiego na kierunkach pedagogicznych w polskich uniwersytetach. Analiza dokumentów regulacyjnych, "Rocznik Pedagogiczny", 38, pp. 37-63.

Clarke C., Knights D, Jarvis C. (2012), A labour of love? Academics in business schools, "Scandinavian Journal of Management", 28(1), pp. 5-15.

Coaldrake P., Stedman L. (1999), Academic Work in the Twenty-first Century. Changing roles and policies, Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs, Canberra.

Cochran-Smith M. (2005), Teacher educators as researchers. Multiple perspectives. Teaching and Teacher Education, 21(2), pp. 219-225.

Cyboran B. (2008), Nauczyciele akademiccy a popularyzacja wiedzy, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego, Kraków.

Dróżka W. (2002), Nauczyciel. Autobiografia. Pokolenia. Studia pedeutologiczne i pamiętnikoznawcze, Wydawnictwo Akademii Świętokrzyskiej.

Ducharme E. R. (1993), The lives of teacher educators, Teachers College Press, New York.

Goćkowski J. (1996), Etos nauki i role uczonych, Secesja, Kraków.

Groundwater-Smith S., Sachs J. (2002), The Activist Professional and the Reinstatement of Trust, Cambridge Journal of Education, 32(3), pp. 341-358.

Hattie J., Marsh H. W. (1996), The relationship between research and teaching. A meta-analysis, "Review of Educational Research", 66(4), pp. 507-542.

Kulczycki E. (2017), Punktoza jako strategia w grze parametrycznej w Polsce, "Nauka i Szkolnictwo Wyższe", 1(49), pp. 63-78.

Kulczycki E., Korytkowski P. (2018), Redesigning the model of book evaluation in the Polish performance-based research funding system, "Journal of Data and Information Science", 3(4), pp. 60-72.

Kulczycki E., Rozkosz E. A., Szadkowski K., Ciereszko K., Hołowiecki K., Krawczyk F. (2020), Local use of metrics for the research assessment of academics: the case of Poland, "Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management", DOI:~10.1080/1360080X.2020.1846243.

Kulikowski K., Antipow E. (2020), Niezamierzone konsekwencje punktozy jako wartości kulturowej polskiej społeczności akademickiej, „Studia Socjologiczne", 3(238), pp. 207-236.

Lankveld T., Schoonenboom J., Volman M., Croiset G., Beishuizen J. (2017), Developing a teacher identity in the university context: a systematic review of the literature, "Higher Education Research & Development", 36(2), pp. 325-342.

Mahony P., Hextall I. (2000), Reconstructing Teaching: standards, performance and accountability, Routledge, New York.

Moore A., Edwards G., Halpin D., George R. (2002), Compliance, resistance and pragmatism: The (re)construction of schoolteacher identities in a period of intense educational reform, "British Educational Research Journal", 28(4), pp. 551-565.

POWER M. (1999), The Audit Society: rituals of verification, Oxford University Press, Oxford.

ROBERTSON J., BOND C. H. (2001), Experiences of the relation between teaching and research. What do academic value?, "Higher Education Research and Development", 20(1), pp. 5-19.

SACHS J. (2003), The activist teaching profession, Philadelphia: Open University Press.

SAJDAK A. (2012), Kompetencje dydaktyczne nauczycieli akademickich a jakość kształcenia w perspektywie KRK, [in:] Edukacja Jutra. Polityka, aksjologia i kreatywność w edukacji jutra, (eds.) K. Denek, A. Kamińska, W. Łuszczuk, P. Oleśniewicz, Wyższa Szkoła Humanitas, Sosnowiec.

SHORE C. (2008), Audit culture and illiberal governance. Universities and the politics of accountability, "Anthropological Theory", 8, pp. 278-298.

SHORE C., WRIGHT S. (2000), Coercive accountability: The rise of audit culture in higher education, [in:] Audit cultures; Anthropological studies in accountability and the academy, (ed.) M. Strathern, Routledge London, New York, pp. 57-89.

SMITH K. (2011), The multi-faceted teacher educator: a Norwegian perspective, "Journal of Education for Teaching", 37(3), pp. 337-349.

SMYTH J., SHACKLOCK G. (1998), Remaking teaching: Ideology, policy and practice, Routledge London, New York.

STRATHERN M. (2000), The tyranny of transparency, "British Educational Research Journal", 26(3), pp. 309-321.

SZPLIT A. (2019), Od nowicjusza do eksperta. Rozwój ekspertywności nauczycieli nauczycieli języków obcych, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Jana Kochanowskiego, Kielce.

WOODS P., JEFFREY B. (2002), The reconstruction of primary teachers' identities, "British Journal of Sociology of Education", 23(1), pp. 89-106.

ZBRÓG Z. (2014), From teaching to learning. University teacher in the sociocultural perspective, [in:]Teacher Educators and Teachers as Learners International Perspectives, (eds.) P. Boyd, A. Szplit, Z. Zbróg, Libron, Kraków.