

SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY OF UNIVERSITIES – THEORETICAL AND PRACTICAL APPROACH

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Purpose: The aim of this article is to present the essence of social responsibility of universities and its areas. The problem on which the study was focused comes down to answering the questions: What should be the direction of education at universities in the context of the challenges of the modern world? What actions are taken by the Department of Logistics and Innovation in the context of SRU in cooperation with the environment?

Design/methodology/approach: The research methods and techniques used included, among others: content analysis, selected methods of qualitative analysis, case study.

Findings: The article reviews selected definitions of social responsibility of universities (SRU), indicating examples of its levels in relation to internal and external stakeholders. Attention is drawn to the need for education for sustainable development (ESD). Examples of socially responsible activities implemented by the Department of Logistics and Innovation in the years 2017-2023 are presented.

Research limitations/implications: The study has some limitations. It shows the levels of social responsibility in a theoretical approach, and in a practical approach only on the example of one department. Further research projects in this area should include a larger research group.

Practical implications: They mainly concern the comprehensive presentation of the areas of social responsibility of universities and challenges in the context of education for sustainable development.

Social implications: Internal and external stakeholders can gain knowledge about the direction of evolution of universities and the nature of responsibility towards them.

Originality/value: The presented case study can be an example of good practices in the area of social responsibility of universities in the area of cooperation with business.

Keywords: social responsibility of universities (USR), areas of social responsibility, education for sustainable development (ESD), cooperation with business

Category of the paper: research paper.

1. Introduction

From a scientific point of view, corporate social responsibility (CSR) has been a subject of interest since the 1920s. In the 1950s, a modern view of CSR emerged (stating that business activities have an impact on people/society, and therefore should be consistent with social goals and values). The 1960s and 1970s were a period when there was a discussion on ethics in business and attempts were made to create theoretical foundations for the concept - the concept of sustainable development appeared then, in the principles of which CSR also has its roots. Today - according to the definition of the European Commission – CSR can be defined as the responsibility of companies for their impact on society. This is an approach in which companies take into account the social and environmental consequences of their actions, taking conscious actions aimed at sustainable social development, environmental protection and compliance with ethical standards. This involves, among others, taking care of the well-being of employees, ensuring fair working conditions and remuneration, minimizing the negative impact on the environment, supporting local communities and complying with the principles of business ethics. The idea of CSR is starting to play an increasingly important role in public institutions (Bokhari, 2017; Kouatli, 2018; Ogarca, Puiu, 2017). And it also applies to universities, because expectations towards them have begun to go beyond education and research (Etzkowitz, 2008; Puukka, 2008). Components of corporate social responsibility that can be/are transferred to universities (Carroll, 1991):

- economic – including productivity, profitability, growth;
- legal – requiring actions in accordance with the law;
- ethical – including unwritten norms and values accepted by society;
- philanthropic – focused on voluntary actions aimed at improving the quality of life of the public.

In the 1990s, the issue of the responsibility of universities towards society emerged – the Erfurt Declaration stated that universities are obliged to identify social and economic needs and contribute to meeting them (The Erfurt Declaration, 1996). One of the groundbreaking documents in expanding the role of the socially responsible university was the UNESCO World Declaration, which emphasized, among other things, that universities are important factors in cultural, socio-economic and environmental development on a global scale. Paraphrasing the definition of the European Commission, one can say that the social responsibility of universities (SRU) is their responsibility for the impact on society.

The aim of this article is to present the essence of social responsibility of universities (with particular emphasis on its two dimensions: cooperation with business and education for sustainable development). The problem on which the study was focused comes down to answering the questions:

- What should be the direction of education at universities in the context of the challenges of the modern world?
- What actions are taken by the Department of Logistics and Innovation in the context of SRU in cooperation with the environment?

In summary, the article aims to present the areas of social responsibility of universities.

2. Methods

Selected research methods and techniques were used to achieve the research objective. Descriptive analysis was used to define the subject of the research. The method of analysis and criticism of literature proved useful for systematizing the current scientific achievements and the state of knowledge on the essence of social responsibility of universities and indicating its areas (including in the field of education). The literature review was conducted in accordance with the classical approach (i.e.: selection of sources, keyword search, review and selection of articles, in-depth analysis of selected publications in relation to the subject of the research). The article will use the case study method, which is used in research on the social responsibility of universities (Hill, 2004; Vasilescu et al., 2010; Metha, 2011; Karwowska, Leja, 2017). The considerations will be exemplified based on the activities undertaken at the Department of Logistics and Innovations of the University of Lodz in 2017-2023.

3. Results

The idea of social responsibility of universities has been discussed in the literature since the 1980s (Bok, 1982) using different terminology – in the American sense, scholarship of engagement or engaged scholarship, then in the categories of university community (Australia and Great Britain), and finally social responsibility of university as an approach adopted in Europe and Asia (Esfijani, 2014). Although it is a relatively new idea (Kouatli, 2018; Larran Jorge et al., 2011), it is the subject of growing academic interest (Larran Jorge, Andrades Pena, 2017; Meseguer-Sanchez et al., 2020). Examples of definitions of social responsibility of universities are presented in Table 1.

In Poland, apart from Leja mentioned in Table 1, the issue of social responsibility of universities was dealt with by, among others, Geryk (2010), who conducted pioneering research in this field in the years 2007–2010; Chmielecka (2008), who analysed this issue from the point of view of academic ethos; from the perspective of image, considerations of SRU were conducted by Białoń and Werner (2012), and from the perspective of brand – Iwankiewicz-Rak

and Shugina (2013); and from the perspective of the university mission – Koj (2013), and from the perspective of the local environment – Szewior (2018).

Table 1.

Selected definitions of social responsibility of universities

| Author | Content of the definition |
|---|--|
| J. Reiser (2007) | Flexible quality of the academic community (students, lecturers and administrative staff) ensured by appropriate management of the educational, cognitive, human resources and environmental impact of the university; conducted in interactive dialogue with society in order to promote the sustainable development of humanity. |
| M. Nejati et al. (2011) | Stakeholders give universities permission to operate and to strengthen this social contract, universities should be socially responsible. |
| E.E. Navarrete et al. (2012) | The ability to disseminate and implement multiple principles and values through key processes (such as governance, education, research) extended to the community in order to ensure sustainable development. |
| R. Vasilescu et al. (2010) | The ethical need to strengthen the social engagement and civic activity of students and university staff by encouraging them to provide services to the local community through volunteering and to promote sustainable development on a local and global scale. |
| P.G. Reiser (2007) | University social responsibility is the responsible management of the educational, cognitive, human resources and environmental impact of the university through interactive dialogue with society, the aim of which is to promote the sustainable development of humanity. |
| Project EU USR (2015) | Policies, strategies and practices undertaken by universities to enhance social, cultural, economic and environmental well-being, emphasizing that social responsibility of universities: - is a tool for promoting civic values and sustainable development, - should be mandatory in some aspects due to the fact that education is a public good, - constitutes a commitment to transparency and accountability. |
| K. Leja (2008) | The university responds positively (but not uncritically) to the expectations of its stakeholders, and the degree to which expectations are met is a measure of its social responsibility. |
| Declaration of Social Responsibility of the University (2017) | A strategic and systemic approach to university management and building cooperation with stakeholders that contributes to: sustainable development, shaping the values and attitudes of civil society, supporting academic values and creating new ideas, and maintaining and developing scientific and teaching competences that affect the effectiveness of operations and innovation. |

Source: own study based on a review of the literature on the subject.

The broadest definition of SRU in Poland is included in the Declaration of Social Responsibility of Universities (2017), and consists of twelve points, concerning, among others: education, research and projects in the field of social responsibility and sustainable development, cooperation in the field of SRU and dialogue with stakeholders, also responsible and transparent management of the university, nurturing values and minimising the negative impact on the environment. Its main goal is to generate public awareness of the role that higher education plays in shaping the conditions for sustainable socio-economic development of the country. The declaration motivates universities to promote the idea of sustainable development and social responsibility in both scientific research and education, as well as

organizational solutions¹. The key to the philosophical and ethical² foundations of the SRU defined in this way is, on the one hand, the axiological dimension of the theory of sustainable development (assuming that each human generation bears responsibility for future generations), and on the other, the idea of social responsibility. Considering the multiple roles that the university plays, its obligations in terms of social responsibility are dual in nature (Chmielecka, 2008):

- the area of direct service related to meeting the needs of internal and external stakeholder groups: the needs of students, staff, and the university's social environment;
- cognitive functions: increasing knowledge, seeking truth, and educating in the perspective of not only the dynamics of work, but also broadly understood proactivity and preparing graduates to act as social leaders in the environment, to being a center for the transmission and transformation of culture and good manners. Effective ongoing training in the field of social responsibility, going beyond business ethics itself, should be integrated with corporate strategies by future employers of current students (Syper-Jędrzejak et al., 2022).

The social responsibility strategy should be linked to the overall strategy of the university and respond to external challenges (social, economic, environmental changes) and build social capital among employees and students. It can be said that in a strategic sense it is inscribed in the DNA of the university – starting from the vision, mission and key values, through strategic goals, policies and programs, and ending with procedures. By including SRU in the basic development strategy of the university, it can be ensured that all actions for the implementation of this concept will be coherent and will contribute to the implementation of sustainable development in the long term.

Jongbloed et al. (2008) claim that a socially responsible university supports equal opportunities, provides education focused on social needs, strengthens the lifelong learning process and helps communities solve major social problems – a socially responsible university is a university serving its surroundings. According to Geryk (2012), the expectations of stakeholders are mainly focused on the needs of „establishing correct relations and stronger social bonds with the environment (...), creating benefits for society in the form of educated graduates or conducting scientific research consistent with the needs of modern society.” In the literature, one can see a slightly broader perspective on the social responsibility of the

¹ Assuming that socially responsible conduct of an organization is the result of proper and moral choices of its members, dictated by the organization's standards in this area (and not the effect of their commitment to fulfilling obligations towards society as a whole or individual stakeholder groups), then the organizational culture (including the system of values on which it is based) plays a key role in the development of ethical standards (Jones, 1995).

² The issue of ethics in higher education can be analysed in two contexts (Davis, 1999):

- as the application of moral values in the relationships between universities and their stakeholders (both internal and external) or, in a broader sense, as the professional ethics of academic teachers and scholars that flow from the ethos of these professions;
- as a university subject and field of study; Adkins and Radtke (2004) focus on this aspect and confirm that students find ethics training useful and valuable.

university - going beyond the sphere of teaching, scientific research and operational activities (Esfijani et al., 2013; Teneta-Skwiercz, 2017). It can be identified with its third mission, i.e. all activities influencing the formation of relations with the social environment. The basic SRU are presented in Table 2.

Table 2.
Areas of social responsibility of universities

| Social responsibility of universities | Examples of manifestations |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| Scientific and research | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - high level of education, - high quality of scientific research, - shaping ethical and responsible business leaders, - supporting and developing innovation, - mobility of students and academic staff, - international and intersectoral exchange of experiences. |
| Social | Internally: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - taking care of employee development, - promoting student and academic mobility, - maintaining international relations, - equalising students' social opportunities, - adapting infrastructure to the needs of disabled people. |
| | Externally: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - providing specialists needed for the labor market, - opinion-forming, - creating political and economic reality, - activities for children, seniors and disabled people, - supporting activities for health protection and promotion of sports, - supporting culture and art, - protection of monuments, - charity events. |
| Ecological | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - curriculum related to environmental protection, - creating and promoting pro-ecological attitudes, - implementing and monitoring sustainable development goals, - reducing the ecological footprint, - research responding to the problems and needs of the natural environment. |
| Economical | Internal: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sustainable supply chain, - Management systems ISO:9000, 14000, 26000, - Non-financial reporting (e.g. in accordance with GRI). |
| | External: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - impact on the local economy, - creation of new staff, - university as an employer, - purchases from regional suppliers, - business partnerships, - consulting services and opinion formation. |

Source: Pawłowska, Osiecka-Brzeska (2019).

From an educational perspective, Idowu and Sitnikov (2020) present several options: engaging young people in the concept of social responsibility; providing specialized training in this area; developing practical skills in social responsibility; and investing in basic and applied research on the subject. Audebrand (2017) argues that the responsibility for teaching social responsibility lies particularly with economic universities (they are expected to include

social responsibility in their strategy, as sustainable development is becoming an increasingly important part of strategic policy). The concept of education for sustainable development (ESD) has emerged in the literature. Most researchers use it in the context of the main goals of the new development paradigm, which „meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (WCED, 1987). This approach is crucial from the perspective of the social responsibility of universities, as it allows to equip students with the ability to make informed decisions and take responsible actions for environmental integrity, economic profitability and a just society for current and future generations, while respecting cultural diversity (Leicht et al., 2018).

The main goals of ESD are to envision alternative and preferable futures and to anticipate and prevent future negative changes as well as the consequences of global sustainable development problems and challenges (Wiek, Withycombe, 2011).

Bokhari (2017) presents a comprehensive analysis of the social responsibility area of HEIs. It combines two types of measures: the first is knowledge transformation (acquisition/ knowledge and dissemination/ education) and the second is social institutionalization (organization/ socialization). Bokhari examines the different responsibilities of HEIs – leading as an organization by example by maintaining socially responsible campuses, conducting valuable research in the ESG (environment, society, governance) domain, and providing evidence-based education, policy advice, and business consulting. Through responsible education, the university encourages awareness of social responsibility and engages students in SRU-related activities; in this way, universities drive and shape sustainable development. Social responsibility of HEIs is a contribution to the UN Sustainable Development Goals and targeted policies in the context of ESG, and raising awareness of social responsibility is a key part of this.

Universities play a unique role in maintaining sustainable development in terms of knowledge creation, knowledge transfer and teaching (Esfijani, Chang, 2012). Ali et al. (2021) share this view that universities are guarantors of sustainable development because these institutions nurture future leaders. Soderbaum (2009) also recognizes that universities influence and educate young people about sustainable development and social responsibility, and therefore universities play an important role in engaging people with these ideas.

Palacios Garay et al. (2016) and Rutti et al. (2016) indicate that education in social responsibility benefits students both professionally and as responsible consumers and citizens. Their research confirms that training students in social responsibility improves their career prospects and competitiveness, while equipping them with knowledge on sustainable development in line with EU policies.

Social responsibility should be based on building voluntary, mutual relations between the organization and its stakeholders in order to meet their expectations (Piasecka, 2015). According to the stakeholder theory and the stakeholder management process – presented by R.E. Freeman (2010) – each organization, after identifying its stakeholders, should attempt

to determine their potential participation in creating the organization's value. Focusing on the stakeholder concept requires and allows for the identification of entities with which the university maintains (both directly and indirectly) a relational character, which means identifying to whom the university is socially responsible. This responsibility has a dual nature: towards internal stakeholders (students, academic staff, administrative and technical staff) and external (graduates, candidates for studies, advisory or supervisory bodies operating at the university Senate, regional community, employers from the external environment of the labor market, authorities – central, regional and local, universities – domestic and foreign). Moubed and Nadizadeh (2022) argue that communication and collaboration between higher education institutions and local and global communities can support the pursuit of a more sustainable society.

Focusing on the cooperation between universities and enterprises, which includes intentional, voluntary interactions aimed at obtaining benefits for the cooperation partners (D'Este, Perkmann, 2011), using resources owned by both parties (Hardy, Phillips, Lawrence, 2013); it should be emphasized that cooperation differs in the degree of formalization, the scope of the parties' activity (from passive, unidirectional use of knowledge to active co-creation), the type of transferred knowledge (explicit vs. tacit), the need for physical mobility, the number of cooperation partners (bilateral and network projects), etc. Examples of forms of cooperation between universities and businesses are presented in Table 3.

Table 3.

Matrix of individual and institutional forms of cooperation between universities and business

| | | Business | |
|--------------|---------------------|--|--|
| | | Individual forms | Institutional forms |
| Universities | Individual forms | Personal contacts Participation in conferences Guest lectures Participation in project teams | Student internships and placements Phd internships/research Consulting Additional employment |
| | Institutional forms | Visiting professors Studies/research internships Participation in scientific councils Additional employment | Cooperation agreements Research consortium Joint research programs Commissioned research projects |

Source: Responsible Partnering (2005).

The empirical approach to selected forms of cooperation – presented in Table 3 – in the context of socially responsible activities is presented in the next part of the article.

4. Case study

The University of Lodz carries out activities in the field SRU, e.g: typical of a third-generation university:

- appointing a vice-rector for cooperation with the environment responsible, among others, for searching for opportunities for change (and using them) as well as developing cooperation with the environment;
- operation of the Center for the Outward-Oriented Cooperation (www.uni.lodz.pl), which cooperates with both the economy and non-governmental organizations; creates fields of study with the involvement of practitioners; develops the culture of entrepreneurship - by providing webinars that create entrepreneurial attitudes for students or supporting startups; mediates in student practices/internships; organizes job fairs and maintains relationships with graduates (e.g. by monitoring graduates' careers, implementing the VIP UŁ graduate program or the UŁ mentoring project);
- two-track student education: general and elite education (implemented thanks to academic tutoring programs);
- internationalization of studies;
- offering direct support to the surrounding entities (those that want to implement changes in their operation) as part of the Science Hub UŁ program³.

They are implemented at the central level but may have an impact on the functioning of individual university units, employees, or students.

The article is intended to represent a case study of the cooperation with the environment implemented by the Department of Logistics and Innovations of the University of Lodz in the years 2017-2023. Therefore, our attention will now be directed to selected examples of this activity (Bukowska-Piestrzyńska, 2024). The presented dimensions USR will refer primarily to students (including their parents) and employers (and in the broader context of the labor market).

Since all the logistics students undergo compulsory internships, they constitute the most ordinary form of cooperation between the Department and business. As the Internship Manager, an employee of the Department is responsible for the compliance of the internship with the field of study, its proper conduct and settlement of its implementation. During the internship, students may collect materials for their diploma thesis, but it sometimes happens that they return

³ The aim of this project is to connect university students carrying out applicable scientific projects (including diploma theses) together with the external entities, such as local enterprises, institutions, and non-governmental organizations with the support of scientific supervisors. Its idea is to strengthen the cooperation of the University of Lodz with its environment by creating a university-wide platform for cooperation between the University of Lodz and external partners. The project is scheduled for 2022-2024 and is financed by the Ministry of Science and Higher Education as part of the Scientific Excellence program. from: <https://www.sciencehub.uni.lodz.pl/science-hub-ul>.

to the enterprise later to obtain information relevant to the thesis topic approved by the supervisor. Annually, approximately 130-150 male and female students complete this mandatory element of their studies.

The form of cooperation between the Department and the business with the longest history is the Logistics Practice Academy, in which business representatives (mainly TSL industry entities, but also motivational speakers, representatives of HR departments, and even the Police and Prison Service) present biweekly meetings the mechanisms of operation of various functional areas of enterprises and solutions to problems in their enterprises. The topics of the speeches related to both hard aspects of business functioning and soft skills needed in the workplace⁴. Over 7 years, almost a hundred meetings were held, attended not only by students of logistics, but also of other fields and even universities. Furthermore, they continued during the pandemic - on the Teams platform - and their topics were related to current economic challenges⁵. Thanks to such cooperation, students often gain a good insight into the specifics of the TSL sector from the very beginning of their studies. This allows them to understand better current challenges, e.g. related to the deteriorating economic situation or human resources management in logistics centers or transport companies (due to staff shortages related to the war in Ukraine).

Training in the field of soft skills, offered to a narrow group of students (mainly members of the LOGIN scientific club) and employees of the Department and carried out by the employees of the HR departments of the entities cooperating with the Department comprises the next step in the development of this form of cooperation⁶.

Open research and economic seminars comprise yet another form of the APL lectures evolution⁷ prepared by the Department's employees in cooperation with representatives of the economic environment. During the debate, guests answer questions not only from the academic leading the meeting, but also from students obliged to prepare for the meeting and actively participate in it.

The above-mentioned forms of cooperation provide students (including employees) with the opportunity to acquire practical knowledge and develop skills, and to establish contacts for

⁴ Sample meeting topics: 1) Practical aspects of transport management for an e-commerce warehouse; 2) Kaizen – practical methods and techniques supporting the development of the organization; 3) Trends in e-commerce logistics, off-line and on-line e-commerce; 4) Logistically functional product. Design supporting logistics; 5) Organization of a modern purchasing department in global corporations and market trends; 6) Every generation wants to change the world, i.e., age management in the organization; 6) Customer relationship management in the international supply chain.

⁵ Sample meeting topics during the pandemic: 1) Logistics - mobility - Covid-19 - change in thinking and action; 2) Challenges and opportunities of the distribution for the e-commerce in the era of the pandemic; 3) Distribution challenges and opportunities for e-commerce in the era of the pandemic.

⁶ Sample training topics: 1) Memory and speed-reading techniques; 2) Self-presentation – public speaking; 3) Modern recruitment and selection tools and techniques in the TFL industry.

⁷ Titles of scientific and economic seminars: 1) Responsible supply chains – transformation in the face of contemporary challenges; 2) Logistics and supply chains 4; 3) Adaptability of supply chains in the contemporary economy.

internships or future employment as well as the opportunity to prepare for the requirements of the labor market and the expectations of enterprises.

A common form of cooperation between the Department and business are study visits by logistics students in a specific enterprise, e.g. visit to the Group *Wastewater Treatment Plant of the Łódź Urban Agglomeration* within the framework of the 'Reverse Logistics' program, visit to the logistics center of Transfer Multisort Elektronik sp. z o.o. (it is a global entity that offers approximately 600,000 product items and handles over 5,000 shipments a day) as a part of the 'Distribution Logistics' program based on which they prepare a short report on the essence of distribution logistics implemented by TME sp. z o.o. student science club Login members take part in a larger number of visits to enterprises which are often combined with workshops⁸. Lecturers also participate in study visits⁹.

The previously mentioned university-wide Science Hub project has become a special form of cooperation with business, in which students, under the supervision of an academic lecturer, solve the problem of an external partner. As a result of the competition procedure, two teams of logistics students were qualified for the project pursuing the following research topics:

- analysis and identification of opportunities and threats for an e-commerce warehouse in the fashion industry - potential directions of the development - in cooperation with Arvato Polska sp. z o. o.;
- optimization of the selected areas of internal logistics of Dradura Polska Sp. z o. o.

While working on the project, students obtain knowledge and support from experts, starting from the idea of the topic through searching for solutions to the presentation of the achieved results. Supervising a student project is a new experience for the mentor from the enterprise as well (sharing knowledge with young people and influencing their development).

From the Department's perspective, the project implemented in 2021 for ARVATO Polska sp. z o.o. (operator of comprehensive services for the e-commerce sector in Poland and worldwide) comprises an important example of cooperation. It was entitled 'Development of the ecological and reusable packaging for use in e-commerce logistics services' and included research and development work and conducting workshops for students which ended with a competition with a prize pool of PLN 10,000 (funded by a business partner). Research has contributed significantly to the transfer of knowledge in an interregional system between the business, academic and scientific research sectors.

⁸ For example: 1) in 2022 members of the scientific club visited: Geis logistics center in Stryków and Decathlon distribution center in Łódź, 2) in 2023 – ID Logistics logistics center in Wola Rakowa and GXO distribution center in Natolin and Łódź.

⁹ For example: 1) in 2018 - PKP dry transshipment port in Małaszewicze; 2) in 2021 – Frigologistics warehouse-freezer distribution center in Żnin; 3) 2022 – PGF distribution center in Łódź.

5. Conclusions

The Code of Good Practices in Higher Education (2017) developed by the Polish Rectors Foundation indicates the awareness and understanding of the needs of higher education institutions. The lack of ignorance towards the social responsibility of universities is evidenced by the provision that they are called to honestly seek the truth, and „the results of this search should document (research goals), educate young generations in methodical knowledge of it, support their intellectual and moral development, as well as prepare future graduates to responsibly perform public and professional functions in a democratic state (didactic and educational goals) and support the cultural and civilizational development (of the entire society (social goals)”. SRU should be expressed in education in the field of social responsibility (including business ethics and eco-development) and sustainable development (Haski-Leventhal, Concato, 2016).

The universities' growing interest in including social responsibility activities in their development strategies, or even in creating separate strategies in that area, is determined by various factors. They include (Dąbrowski et al., 2018):

- the growing popularity of social responsibility and its active promotion within international initiatives and organizations, such as the UN Global Compact or the European Union;
- the growing competition on the education market, forcing universities to seek new ways to gain a competitive edge by turning to uncharted territories to reinforce their reputation;
- the expanding and thickening network of university stakeholders, whose assessment and the related support (or lack thereof) becomes crucial for the conditions in which those entities function (the growing expectations of accrediting institutions in terms of organizational social responsibility are a part of that phenomenon);
- the growing gap between the education models and the market need for new skills, including skills related to the development of organizational social responsibility policies;
- the growth of universities and their campuses in terms of size - resulting in considerable consumption of resources, such as energy and water, by those entities and thus their growing environmental impact (and growing awareness of the university in this respect).

The article identifies areas of social responsibility of universities. It presents the importance of education for sustainable development as a socially responsible activity. It identifies areas of cooperation between universities and enterprises that can create value and presents their empirical exemplification. The presented case study – examples of socially responsible activities implemented by the Department of Logistics and Innovation, University of Lodz – is a contribution to the development of research on socially responsible universities.

This approach is in line with the position of Palacios Garay et al. (2016) and Rutti et al. (2016), who point out that education in social responsibility brings benefits to students (both professionally and as responsible consumers and citizens) and improves their career prospects.

In the context of designing further directions of scientific research on the social responsibility of universities, the research implications concern the recognition of the level of awareness of decision-makers in higher education institutions about the areas of social responsibility and, consequently, the issues of relations between universities and other stakeholders (e.g. local government entities or graduates) and the creation of a catalogue of good practices in the discussed scope. A broader research problem may be the search for an answer to the question: what should be the direction of education at universities in the context of the challenges of the modern world?

In light of the unethical behaviour of some universities, it is crucial for policymakers and national regulators to create incentives for universities to take steps to develop and implement multi-faceted social responsibility strategies.

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