

# An Ideal University Project

Małgorzata Dzimińska, PhD



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## Education

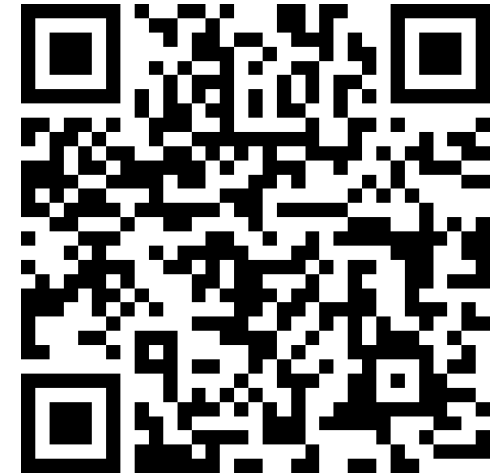
Master in English Philology, Postgraduate studies in Management,  
PhD in Pedagogy

## Career

1. Administrative & management career in internationalization of Higher Education (2000-2009)
2. International business career in consulting for public sector: education, health and human services, IT for education (2010-2017)
3. Academic career after gaining a PhD – Assistant Professor at the University of Łódź (2018 - )

## Research on Higher Education:

- quality culture
- quality assurance and management
- leadership
- data use for education improvement
- science communication



Publications



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# Łódź

- Central location
- Fourth largest city in Poland with population of 700 000
- The city's name translated literally means „a boat”.





# University of Łódź



- Foundation date: 1945
- Number of faculties: 12
- Number of scientific disciplines represented: 21
- Number of students: ca. 30 000
- Academic staff: ca. 2 200
- Number of international students: ca. 3 000
- Number of international agreements: over 250
- One of the largest universities in Poland

A person with dark, curly hair is shown from the chest up, wearing a white long-sleeved shirt. They are holding a large, white, cloud-shaped speech bubble in front of their face. The background is a solid orange color. In the top right corner, there is a purple graphic element that looks like a stylized arrow or a corner bracket pointing towards the center.

**What is a student  
ideal-type University?**

# Conceptual framing – Weberian „ideal-type”



- Basic assumption: each social action has expected features.
- Developing an ideal type involves **selecting, organizing, and synthesizing discrete elements of a complex phenomenon** and forming an abstract conceptual construct (Weber, 1978). In this case, the ideal-type synthesizes the mental images on what qualities make up the student concept of an ideal University.
- The ideal-type construct promotes a more in-depth conversation about the „**explicit, implicit and idealistic expectations**” (Wong & Chiu, 2019, p. 1)
- Ideal-types should be used „not as an end but as a *means*” (Weber, 1949, p. 92)
- They provide strong „conceptual instruments for *comparison* with and the *measurement* of reality” (Weber, 1949, p. 97).
- Constructing a student-based ideal-type university model offers a **benchmark** against which the reality or improvement plans can be investigated and hypotheses can be formulated.
- Making comparisons between the model and the reality prompts questions of: **how** is the reality different from the model, **why** it is different, **what might be the implications** stemming from these differences.

# Research participants

- convenience sampling
- bachelor students from the University of Łódź (n=64)
  - business (n=14), social sciences (n=21), the humanities (n=11), natural and applied sciences (n=18).
  - 1st year students (n=47), 2nd year students (n=5), 3rd year students (n=12)
  - female (n=33), male (n=31)
  - full-time students (no fee paying) (n=52), part-time students (fee-paying) (n=12)
  - domestic students (n=60), international students (n=4)



# Data collection

- the study was held in May and June 2021 during Covid-19
- 12 online focus groups
- Scenario with a list of questions
- The same moderator in all FGs

Sample discussion questions:

1. What are your first associations when you hear "Ideal University" (IU)?
2. What was the biggest surprise for you during your studies?
3. In what way do you like to learn the most?
4. From whom would you like to learn at IU?
5. With whom would you like to study at the IU?
6. How should the IU be organized so that you can learn just that way?
7. Where and on what principles does the Ideal University operate?
8. What types of ideal universities can you imagine?
9. What mission and goals guide the IU?
10. What kind of experience would you like to have at IU?
11. What features of the university would cause you to feel that the university exists for you?
12. What role does technology play in the ideal university?
13. What does the ideal university look like physically?
14. What happens there on a daily basis?
15. What is the atmosphere like at the IU?
16. What does your day at the IU look like?
17. How do you feel at the IU?
18. What does the UI support you with?
19. How does the UI help you achieve your life goals?
20. What are the characteristics of your relationships with other students/faculty/administrative staff at IU?
21. How does the UI interact with the world around it?
22. What role does it play in its environment, in the country, in the world?
23. What should NOT take place at the IU?
24. How do you know that the IU offers high quality?





# Findings

# The goal of the university experience



## Ideal University - Student Growth Incubator

- Incubate holistic human development
- Equip students with the necessary package of knowledge, skills, and attitudes to succeed in life and change the world
- Support students to shape their identity and become a better person



*I can also add that it's definitely **a place where I'll find my interest, and I'll have satisfaction from learning.** And then I'll know that this is what interests me. And **this University will give me these opportunities to realize myself.** And studying there, in fact, **it will give me pleasure,** and I will have the impression that I am in a good place, and **this place helps me to develop. Not only in the chosen field, but just broadly.** (S34)*

*Everyone should have such a space **to develop their passion or find it somehow.** After all, only we can discover what's cool in us. And the lecturers who can help... yes, they can see if we're good or if we could be good, and help us. Or we could help each other as students, **just to develop,** because I think **that's what the University is about – developing.** (S47)*

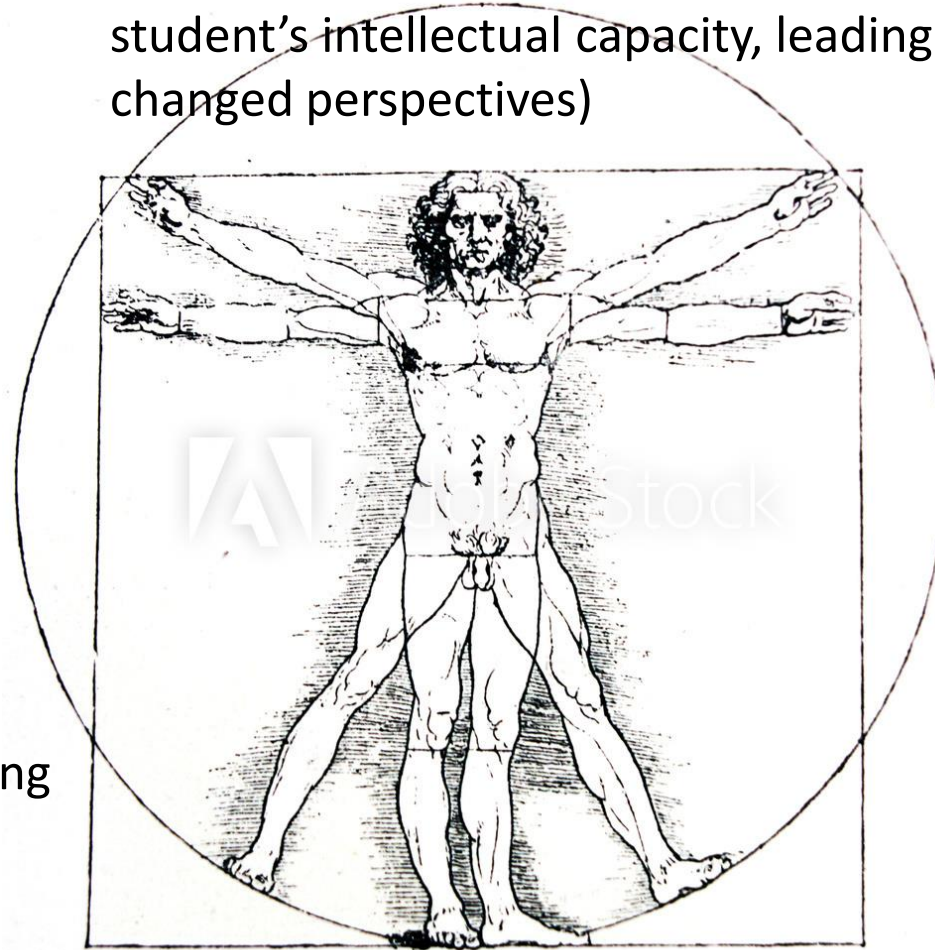
# Enhancement



**Intellectual** (developing the knowledge, skills and attitudes that expand the student's intellectual capacity, leading to changed perspectives)

**Critical** (developing the skills of critical analysis, synthesis, (self)reflection, discussion),

**Personal** (engaging in the process of conscious developing one's personal opinions, behaviour and attitudes)



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**Emotional** (engaging in a psychological change and becoming motivated to learn)

**Physical** (relating to a change of environment or an age-related physical feature change)

(typology Cheng, 2016)



# The student learning environment

*I also think that the requirements should go hand in hand with this **human understanding and the desire to really understand each other**. Because, you know, you can't understand this big community, but the individual approach seems to me to be the key here, looking at us this way as separate individuals. (S40)*

## Values

- Human-centredness
- Respect
- Tolerance
- Inclusivity
- Openness
- Empathy

## Homely atmosphere

- Individualized approach
- Close relationships
- Safety
- Care
- Understanding
- Trust

*It is an institution that is curious about my opinion of it, **willing to meet my expectations** (S43).*

## Campus

- Physical and/or virtual
- Open 24h a day
- Modern
- Technologically-advanced solutions

# The actors

## Ideal student

- Ambitious
- Reflective learner
- Active contributor
- Co-creator

## Ideal teacher

- Communicative and approachable person
- Passionate expert
- Transformational leader
- Role model

*It is made up of people who know how to share knowledge as well as embrace it. **Open to development and able to accept constructive criticism.***

*Aware of their own imperfection and not expecting perfectionism from others.*

*Having the required knowledge, but also **willing to question and transform it.** (S63)*

*They should talk about who this major is for; for example, **what you can change after this major, how people after this major impact the world** (S49).*

*The relationship between the lecturer and the students should take place in such a way **that the lecturer should inspire the students, encourage them to expand their knowledge on the subject, and direct them so that the students can find their way in life.** (S28)*



# Pedagogy

- Safe space to open up and develop
- Active learning
- Student-Centered Learning and Teaching
- Experiential Learning
- Project and group work
- In close relationship with empathic teachers

*if the lecturer expects only individual work for the entire semester, it's not in any way preparation for work in the future or for functioning in society (S17)*

*I think the University exists for us if I feel comfortable there and there are people who understand us (S22)*

*Learning should be such a free exchange of ideas, in smaller groups, rather than big lecture halls, with less distance. Maybe a bit more project-oriented (S32)*

*Each of us should have the right to sometimes not know something, sometimes say something that doesn't make sense, because the discussion here is not about being perfect, about getting the final results now, but about creating them together. Not to reach some kind of perfection that we will probably never achieve, because we are not robots, but simply to shape ourselves together and improve. (S63)*

# Empowerment

## Developing the ownership of the learning process

*Why I dropped out of my earlier studies, for example. Because I didn't know what it was, right? And in my opinion, this ideal university should also show what studying is really about.... And there are people, like me, who after three semesters only understood what studying really is, what to focus on during studying, and that it's not worth panicking too much. (S64)*

## Releasing the co-creation power

*If the lecturer gives space for such a discussion, for such a reflection, it engages the student to better acquire knowledge, and it also engages him to create and contribute to the creation of classes. It is not only a one-sided transfer of knowledge but created jointly by both parties. (S63)*

## Offering choices

*I think that a very important factor is the choice of whether to put the student in a situation where he/she has to choose a certain path or join a project from the available pool.... This models the student's interactions with the university in a completely different way. (S10)*



# Conclusions and implications



Areas	Insights from students	Student insights-based recommendations for the University
<b>Holistic transformation</b>	Transformation is a multidimensional concept.	Provide guidance and support, not only in intellectual and critical development, but also personal, emotional and physical transformation spheres so that the student transformation process is supported holistically.
<b>Empowerment</b>	Empowerment 'models the student's interactions with the university in a completely different way' (S10)	Dedicate time for practising various forms of empowerment (e.g., learning to learn, co-creation).
<b>Transformation journey</b>	Transformation might not be a straightforward process.	Validate student right to change studying modes, timelines or majors and support it as a regular element of their transformation quest.
<b>Motivation</b>	A student is motivated by both Humboldtian and consumerist motivations.	Engage a student by explicitly referring to both types of motivations. One motivation does not exclude the other, contrary they are both present in a student's view.
<b>Pedagogy</b>	Active and deep learning is what the students view as ideal.	Apply more transformative learning pedagogies.
<b>Teacher leadership</b>	Students want their teachers not only to teach but to help them find their path in life.	Train academic staff to become transformational leaders.



# Conclusions and implications



Areas	Insights from students	Student insights-based recommendations for the University
<b>Climate</b>	Students need a safe space to open up and enter the 'transformative mode'.	Embrace the students' right to err. Promote human-centredness, understanding, empathy, and individual approach towards each student.
<b>Values</b>	Trust, respect, openness, and tolerance are the values that are characteristic of a student's ideal university.	Build the university's quality culture, where shared values are promoted and practised by all stakeholders.
<b>Communication</b>	Lecturers 'should talk about who this major is for; for example, what you can change after this major, how people after this major impact the world' (S49).	Put more effort into communicating clearly the value, goals and expected outcomes of student learning, and present a big picture for better contextualisation of the courses and programmes offered, as well as opportunities that studying them creates.
<b>Integrity</b>	Students have a 'radar' for any inconsistencies or underdelivered promises.	Promote and reinforce integrity, honesty and transparency.

# Ideal University project in two publications:



- Dzimińska, M. (2022a). How quality as transformation is manifested and enabled in a student vision of an ideal university: implications for quality management in higher education. *Quality in Higher Education*  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/13538322.2022.2060786>
- Dzimińska, M (2022b) An ideal University: A Student Growth Incubator, Journal of Further and Higher Education, <https://doi.org/10.1080/0309877X.2022.2131379>

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[https://doi.org/ISBN 9789078997320](https://doi.org/ISBN%209789078997320)



# Thank you



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## Questions for a discussion

1. How can the findings from the Ideal University be relevant in your context?
2. How can the ideal-type methodology be applied in the context of the Campus of the Future project?