



THE WARSAW SCHOOL OF ECONOMICS (SGH) ON ITS ANNIVERSARY AND BETWEEN ANNIVERSARIES

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Professor Tomasz Szapiro – Rector of the SGH. Master of Physics (University of Warsaw), Doctor of Mathematics (Polish Academy of Sciences), Professor of Economics (SGH). Adjunct Professor at the University of Minnesota. His research is focused on the analysis of methods of decision-making in Economics and Management. Publications and academic co-operation in Poland and abroad. Numerous awards and distinctions.

PM The year 2016 is a jubilee year. The Warsaw School of Economics celebrates its 110th birthday. On such occasions we often look back to history. At the time of its establishment, in 1906, the school was focused entirely on economics. And what about today?

I will repeat the words of Alphonse Karr, the editor of *Le Figaro*: Plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose (The more it changes, the more it's the same thing. – ed.) August Zieliński, the founder of the SGH, believed that Polish society and state would be protected from threats not only thanks to a strong army, but also thanks to the ability of Poles to manage their economy professionally, including international trade. This idea continued to make itself apparent throughout the entire history of the School inextricably linked to Poland's difficult history. 110 years of the SGH is an offer of studies for professionals acquiring knowledge resulting from familiarity with academic research and wide open to the world and the ability to function in that world. Of course, changes in the environment meant that at various times we did it differently, but the overriding idea has always been to serve society. Today, there are no restrictions when it comes to the freedom of research, and being open to the world means being really open to the content of teaching, students and faculty members. In the past, access to knowledge and people was limited. Now political constraints have disappeared and thanks to the Internet and supporting the mobility of students and scholars, the world has become more accessible. The SGH is drawing from this opportunity and is able to exploit it.

How do we do this? We have been consistently building the culture of co-operation

between the school and its economic and social surroundings. During our studies we offer an open environment where the needs of various groups, students, faculty and companies can meet. This is aided by the flexible system of studies allowing students to adjust to the requirements of their employers, by appreciating academics overseeing student projects and investments such as those into the co-working infrastructure. Project activity is part of certain study programmes at the SGH, but also constitutes independent student activity which supplements their courses, helps develop their organisational talents and shapes the ability to apply the knowledge acquired during lectures to resolving specific problems facing businesses. This is important because contacts with companies give rise to new interests or depreciate earlier fascinations, thus positively affecting the choices made by students who can influence the syllabus content.

PM Does the labour market verify the directions of teaching? Did the school have to adjust its didactic offer to the current market trends?

Certainly. However, this is not just a market challenge, but also an academic one. In the early 1990s we left the artificially created reality of a centrally planned economy and moved to the global academic world. Publications and teaching contents compete on an unprecedented scale. Our initial position in social sciences and economics was difficult, but we have made a huge leap forward. We publish in global journals, participate in international projects, attract scholars from dozens of countries to international conferences held at our school. The generation studying after the 1989 watershed,

including students born after 1970, can easily compete against their peers elsewhere in the world. Today, the “forty-somethings” who decided to take advantage of this educational opportunity are professionals capable of working in international teams and dealing with the difficult problems facing the contemporary economy, as well as participating in research as employees of public and private sector institutions. We find them in the offices of politicians where they work as economic experts and in global corporations where they successfully occupy managerial positions. Training teachers and students is more important for the quality of teaching than the study programmes. And here the SGH does really well.

PM Professor, what are the challenges facing you as the Rector of the SGH?

There are three such challenges. In order to successfully pursue our mission, we must educate young people in Poland so that they are ready to take on the global world. They must communicate in foreign languages, be able to function among different cultures and be knowledgeable, skilful and creative. Thus, first, we must oversee the quality of this education. Second, we must meet the needs of economic education of the entire society. Our school together with our Children's University and the collaborating Third Age University are successfully extending the education formula in an important direction, responding to these needs, but are yet to find mature organisational forms. The biggest challenge for us is to be a friendly school in our relations with people, in providing content and in taking up research topics. All that is required of us today. •