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The Impact of Basic Research on the Quality of Higher Education in Poland: as Reflected in the Program Evaluation Reports of the Polish Accreditation Commission

Abstract

The paper is devoted to the analysis of the impact of basic research on the quality of education at the level of higher education in Poland, with particular emphasis on the program evaluation reports of the Polish Accreditation Commission (PKA). The first part of the paper presents the main assumptions of the evaluation of higher education quality in Poland. The extent to which basic research contributes to educational quality standards was then verified. The last part presents the state of practice in the inclusion of basic research in the process of program evaluation by PKA. This discussion is based on an analysis of program evaluation reports for the faculty of law. The author seeks answers to the following questions: Does the law enforce the inclusion of basic research in PKA program evaluation? And does practice implement the law's requirements to include basic research in PKA's program evaluation? The study was created as a result of the research project entitled *Impact of legal basic research on legal education on the example of basic research funded by the National Science Center in Poland* No. 2021/41/B/ HS5/0331 (NCN). The scientific purpose of the project is to analyze and evaluate the impact of NCN-funded basic research in the legal sciences, conducted by academics, on the education of lawyers at public universities in Poland.

KEYWORDS: basic research, quality of education, higher education, program evaluation, report, Polish Accreditation Commission

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HTTPS://DOI.ORG/10.36128/PRIW.VI53.1060

1 Introduction

Fundamental to the process of seeking knowledge, scientific research provides evidence for the formulation of new theories and laws, and allows progress in various fields. Various types of scientific research serve the development of science. One of these is basic research, which yields new knowledge and serves as a source for practical applications[1]. In the past decade, there has been a noticeable global trend of research on the role of basic research in improving the quality of education and the overall effectiveness of higher education systems. Research on the relationship between basic research and teaching, or the quality of higher education is being conducted in many places around the world[2]. The Humboldt model of the university tradition in Europe is known for its integration of research and the teaching process. The reform of higher education in Poland, introduced by the Law of July 20, 2018 Law on higher education and science, appears to separate the field of science from that of education, placing more emphasis on scientific achievement than on teaching[3]. Meanwhile, integrating these two areas by incorporating basic research into the educational process not only affect its quality but consequently

1 Kazimierz Wojciech Frieske, „Polityki publiczne: iluzje uniwersalnej racjonalności", [in:] *Nauki o polityce Publicznej. Studia i materiały*, ed. Jerzy Kwaśniewski (Warszawa: Instytut Profilaktyki Społecznej i Resocjalizacji, 2018), 8. Kazimierz Szatkowski, *Przygotowanie produkcji* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, 2008), 31.

2 Jonh Hattie, Herb W. Marsh, „The Relationship between Research and Teaching: A Meta-Analysis" *Review of Educational Research*, No. 4 (1996): 507–542; James Peter Bentley et al, „The relationship between basic and applied research in universities" *Higher Education*, Vol. LXX (2015): 689–709; James Peter Bentley, Magnus Gulbrandsen, Svein Kyvik, „The relationship between basic and applied research in universities" *Higher Education*, No. 70 (2015): 689–709; Hala Sacre, „The effect of research on the perceived quality of teaching: a cross-sectional study among university students in Lebanon" *BMC Medical Education*, No. 23 (2023): 23–31.

3 Maciej Perkowski, „Relations of Research and Teaching in Legal Education: International Legal Framework and Selected National Solutions" *Krytyka Prawa*, No. 2 (2023): 214. Maciej Perkowski, „The higher education transformation and legal framework of the research-teaching relations in the polish higher education system, Transformacje" No. 3 (2022): 135. See more in: Marek Kwiek, „Pytanie o badania naukowe: od deinstytucjonalizacji do reinstytucjonalizacji misji badawczej polskich uczelni" *Nauka i Szkolnictwo Wyższe*, No. 2 (2015): 31–61.

leads to the result of better preparing students for the challenges of the outside world[4].

The Polish Accreditation Commission (hereinafter: PKA, Commission) is responsible for the external evaluation of the quality of education at the level of higher education in Poland. The Commission evaluates programs in the fields of study conducted by the university. This evaluation is based on the educational quality criteria adopted by the Commission and is intended to show an objective picture of various aspects of the educational process. In the context of conducting program evaluation, questions arise: Do legal regulations enforce the inclusion of basic research in PKA program evaluation? Does practice implement the requirements under the law to include basic research in program evaluation?

The degree of implementation of basic research in the educational process and its impact on the quality of education can be assessed by analyzing PKA program evaluation reports. Verification of the reports identifies of strengths and areas for improvement in the process of integrating basic research into the criteria of educational quality. This verification also provides guidance for further improvement of teaching processes.

2 Assumptions of the evaluation of the quality of education at the level of higher education in Poland

The Polish Accreditation Commission is responsible for the external evaluation of the quality of higher education in Poland. PKA is an independent institution that works to improve the quality of education. This means that it is autonomous in its decisions, including the evaluation of educational quality. Organizationally, however, it is subordinate to the competent minister for higher education[5]. The Commission's goal is „to take care

4 See: Justyna Maria Bugaj, Małgorzata Budzianowska-Drzewiecka, „Wstęp", [in:] *Jakość kształcenia akademickiego*, ed. Justyna Maria Bugaj, Małgorzata Budzianowska-Drzewiecka (Kraków Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego, 2022): 8.

5 Art. 251 ust. 1 Ustawy z dnia 20 lipca 2018 r. Prawo o szkolnictwie wyższym i nauce, Dz. U. 2018 poz. 1668, ze zm.; Adam Balicki, „Przepisy ogólne", [in:] *Prawo*

of meeting the quality standards adopted for higher education, referring to the best models valid in the European and global educational space, and to support public and non-public higher education institutions in the process of improving the quality of education, as well as building a culture of quality. These activities are aimed at providing graduates of Polish higher education institutions with a high position in the domestic and international labor market, as well as increasing the competitiveness of Polish universities as European institutions"[6].

The Commission's body consist of up to 100 members and the President of the Student Parliament of the Republic of Poland[7]. Candidates for PKA members must meet the requirements specified by law[8]. Candidates may be submitted by such entities as: the General Council for Science and Higher Education, the Conference of Rectors of Academic Schools in Poland, the Conference of Rectors of Public Vocational Universities, the Conference of Rectors of Vocational Schools in Poland, the presidium of PKA, PSRP, national scientific associations and employers' organizations[9]. he minister responsible for science appoints PKA members. PKA's legal status is regulated by the Law of July 20, 2018 Law on higher education and science and its statutes. The regulations contained therein specify, among other things: the organization and method of operation of PKA, the tasks of its bodies, the criteria and procedure for making assessments, the rules for selecting courses of study for assessment in a given year, the rules and procedure for appointing experts and the rules for granting certificates[10].

The PKA evaluation process includes program assessment, which involves the periodic evaluation of educational quality in specific fields of study. The Commission establishes a schedule of evaluations for a given academic year, which it draws up in the previous academic year. For evaluation, it designates majors and levels of study for which the six-year deadline

o szkolnictwie wyższym. Komentarz, ed. Magdalena Pyter (Warszawa C.H. Beck, 2012): 124.

6 The website of the Polish Accreditation Commission. https://pka.edu.pl/o-pka/misja-pka/. [accessed: 16.07.2024].

7 Art. 251 ust. 2, Ustawy z dnia 20 lipca 2018 r., op. cit.

8 The required criteria are: good repute, observance of scientific ethics, doctoral degree, teaching achievements, not over 70 years of age, full legal capacity, enjoyment of public rights, no conviction for an intentional crime, no disciplinary record, no cooperation with the security organs in the period from 22.07.1944 to 31.07.1990., art. 251 ust. 5 and art. 20 ust. 1–5, Ustawy z dnia 20 lipca 2018 r., op. cit.

9 Art. 251 ust. 3 and 4, Ustawy z dnia 20 lipca 2018 r., op. cit.

10 Ibidem, art. 256 ust. 1.

for issuing the previous evaluation has expired, the promotion of the first graduates has taken place or other circumstances have occurred that agree with the evaluation. The evaluation may also be carried out at the request of the competent minister of higher education or at the approved request of the university. The evaluation team consists of from two to seven PKA members and experts, although in special cases the evaluation body may be larger. The composition of the evaluation team is indicated by the Secretary of the Commission in agreement with the chairman of the field team[11].

According to the Law on higher education and science, when carrying out program evaluation, PKA must take into account: study programs and educational standards; teaching and research staff; infrastructure used to implement the study program; cooperation with the socio-economic environment; internationalization; support for students in the learning process[12]. On the basis of the statutory authorization in Article 248, the Regulation of the Minister of Science and Higher Education of September 12, 2018 on the criteria for program evaluation was issued[13] which identified 10 criteria for program evaluation. In accordance with Article 256, paragraph 1, item 3 of the cited law, these criteria are detailed in the PKA Statute. In the context of improving the quality of education in faculties with a general academic profile, the standard forms a set of the following criteria:

- Criterion l. Construction of the study program: concept, learning objectives and learning outcomes;
- Criterion 2. Implementation of the study program: curriculum content, schedule for implementation of the study program and forms and organization of classes, educational methods, professional practice, organization of the teaching and learning process;
- Criterion 3. Enrollment, verification of students' achievement of learning outcomes, completion of individual semesters and years, and graduation;
- Criterion 4. Competence, experience, qualifications and size of the teaching staff, as well as development and improvement of the staff;

11 See: Załącznik nr 1 do Statutu Polskiej Komisji Akredytacyjnej Zasady doboru kierunków studiów do oceny programowej w danym roku akademickim. https://pka.edu.pl/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/statut-PKA-tekst-ujednolicony-marzec-2024.pdf. [accessed: 18.07.2024].

12 Art. 242 ust. 2 Ustawy z dnia 20 lipca 2018 r..., op. cit.

13 Poz. 1787.

- Criterion 5. Infrastructure and educational resources used for the implementation of the study program and their improvement;
- Criterion 6. Cooperation with the socio-economic environment in the construction, implementation and improvement of the study program and its impact on the development of the faculty.
- Criterion 7. Conditions and ways to increase the degree of internationalization of the educational process in the direction
- Criterion 8. Support for students in learning, social, scientific or professional development and entry into the labor market and the development and improvement of forms of support;
- Criterion 9. Public access to information about the study program, the conditions of its implementation and the results achieved;
- Criterion 10. quality policy, design, approval, monitoring, review and improvement of the program of study[14].

The first stage of the PKA program evaluation is the preparation of a self-assessment report by the university. The report is prepared in accordance with the guidelines and model established by the Presidium of PKA[15]. It forms the basis for assessing the quality of education in a given field of study. Subsequently, the evaluation team conducts an inspection, during which it performs a detailed analysis of the study program, infrastructure, teaching resources, classes taught and other factors affecting the quality of education. Following the inspection, the evaluation team prepares a report in accordance with the template established by the Presidium of PKA. This report includes an assessment of specific aspects of the program and recommendations for possible actions. The university is then given the opportunity to respond to the comments and recommendations in the report. The evaluation team or the teacher education team then develops an opinion based on the evaluation team's report and the university's position. This opinion is forwarded to the Presidium of PKA, which adopts a resolution based on the collected materials. The resolution includes a decision on

14 Statut Polskiej Komisji Akredytacyjnej, Załącznik do uchwały nr 4/2018 Polskiej Komisji Akredytacyjnej 13 grudnia 2018 r. s. 22–28. https://pka.edu.pl/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/statut-PKA-tekst-ujednolicony-marzec-2024.pdf. [accessed: 18.07.2024].

15 See: Załącznik nr 1 do uchwały nr 66/2019 Prezydium Polskiej Komisji Akredytacyjnej z dnia 28 lutego 2019 r. z późn. zm., Ocena programowa, Profil ogólnoakademicki, Raport samooceny. https://pka.edu.pl/dla-uczelni/wzory-raportow-samooceny/. [accessed: 18.07.2024].

the evaluation of the program, as well as any recommendations or other formal results. he evaluation team's report, the Presidium's resolution, and the university's position are published, ensuring the transparency of the evaluation process and allowing all interested parties to access the evaluation results. The evaluation procedure also provides for an appeal stage. A university that disagrees with the PKA's resolution may request reconsideration, which is considered by the appeal team[16].

The key element in the entire PKA program evaluation procedure is the report of the evaluation team, which is the basis for the PKA Presidium's decision to award a positive or negative grade, also indicating recommendations and actions to improve the quality of education. The report is a comprehensive document that describes in detail the process of program evaluation conducted in a given field of study. Among other things, it contains information on the course of the inspection, including the composition of the evaluation team and a description of the various stages of the evaluation. The report also contains basic information about the course and program of study being evaluated. Its most important element is a proposal for assessing the degree of fulfillment of the detailed criteria for program evaluation, which is developed by the PKA evaluation team, as well as a detailed description of the extent to which the evaluated program meets the established criteria and standards of educational quality. The report also includes appendices that cover the legal basis for assessing the quality of education, the schedule of the inspection conducted and the evaluation of selected stage and diploma theses, which gives a full picture of both the assessment process and the compliance of the study program with quality requirements[17].

16 Statut Polskiej Komisji Akredytacyjnej, op. cit., par. 17-22.

17 See: Załącznik nr 1 do uchwały nr 67/2019 Prezydium Polskiej Komisji Akredytacyjnej z dnia 28 lutego 2019 r. z późn. zm. Profil ogólnoakademicki Raport zespołu oceniającego Polskiej Komisji Akredytacyjnej. https://pka.edu.pl/dla-uczelni/wzory-raportow-zespolu-oceniajacego/. [accessed: 18.07.2024].

3 Basic research as a component of the educational quality standard

According to the legal definition, basic research is defined as empirical or theoretical work aimed at acquiring new knowledge about the fundamentals of phenomena and observable facts without aiming at direct commercial application. In addition to basic research, the law also distinguishes the category of applied research, which is work aimed at acquiring new knowledge and skills, aimed at developing new products, processes or services or making significant improvements to them[18]. The distinction between the two categories of research is intended to reflect the intent of conducting them. In simple terms, in the case of basic research, these are works without direct commercial application in mind, while in the case of applied research, these are works aimed at developing new products. As Jerzy Woźnicki points out, in practice, the differentiation of the indicated types of research will take place mainly at the level of activities of decision-making bodies and administrators of funds. This will first take place at the stage of initial allocation and then at the stage of current decisions by authorized agencies that qualify applications for research projects. The decisive factor will be their approach and attitude[19].

Since April 30, 2010 the National Science Center[20] (hereinafter: NCN or Center), the state executive agency, has played a key role in the development of Polish science through a broad spectrum of activities related to the management and financing of basic research[21]. The tasks of the Center include financing of basic research through research projects which include: purchase and manufacture of scientific and research equipment; implementation of research under international programs; projects carried out by young scientists; doctoral scholarships, post-doctoral internships and projects for experienced scientists to conduct interdisciplinary research that may lead to significant scientific discoveries. The Center

18 Art. 4 ust. 1 i 2, Ustawy z dnia 20 lipca 2018 r. ..., op. cit.

19 Jerzy Woźnicki, „Przepisy ogólne art. 4", [in:] *Prawo o szkolnictwie wyższym i nauce. Komentarz*, ed. Jerzy Woźnicki (Warszawa: Wolters Kluwer, 2019), 53.

20 Art. 1 ust. 2 Ustawa z dnia 30 kwietnia 2010 r. o Narodowym Centrum Nauki, Dz. U. z 2010 r., Nr 96 poz. 617 ze zm.

21 According to art.18. it is a legal entity created under a separate law to carry out the tasks of the state, Ustawa z dnia 27 sierpnia 2009 r. o finansach publicznych, Dz. U. z 2009 r., Nr 157 poz. 1240 ze zm.

also supervises the implementation of funded research and disseminates information to the scientific community about the competitions announced by the Center, which promotes active participation in these programs and increases the chances of receiving financial support[22].

In seeking an answer to the question: does the law compel the inclusion of basic research in PKA's programmatic evaluation, one should first refer to the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG)[23]. The ESG standards were developed by the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (hereinafter: the Association or ENQA)[24] taking a leading role in developing quality assurance systems in higher education. The main goal of the ESG standards is to work toward a common understanding of quality assurance for learning and teaching among all stakeholders. ENQA has not distinguished a separate standard dedicated to the conduct of basic research, however, they are an integral part of the individual educational quality standards. In the case of Standard 1.1 Quality Assurance Policy, it is indicated that: „Quality assurance policies are most effective when they reflect the link between research and learning and teaching [...]". The guidance for Standard 1.5 Teaching Staff emphasizes the university's responsibility for the quality of its teaching staff and for providing a supportive environment that enables them to do their work effectively. In such an environment, scholarly activity is encouraged to strengthen the links between education and research. On the other hand, under standard 1.9 Continuous monitoring and periodic program reviews, it was pointed out that evaluation of program content to ensure its relevance should consider the latest research in the discipline[25].

A similar solution operates at the national level with regard to the PKA program evaluation criteria for the general academic profile of studies. Under criterion 1, which deals with the design of the study program, the concept and objectives of education, it is indicated that they must be related to the scientific activities carried out at the university in a given discipline,

22 Art. 20. ibidem.

23 Jakub Brdulak, „Ocena jakości kształcenia w Polsce – problemy i rekomendacje" *Nauka i Szkolnictwo Wyższe*, No. 2 (2016): 81–82.

24 Between 2000-2004 European Network for Quality Assurance in Higher Education, ENQA.

25 Standardy i wskazówki dotyczące zapewnienia jakości w Europejskim Obszarze Szkolnictwa Wyższego zatwierdzone przez Konferencję Ministerialną w maju 2015, p. 7, 10, 12.

which ensures that study programs are up-to-date and respond to the needs of the labor market and the socio-economic environment.

Criterion 2 focuses on evaluating the implementation of the study program, including curriculum content, schedule, class form and organization, teaching methods, professional practice, and the organization of the teaching and learning process. The standard dictates that the curriculum content must align with the learning outcomes, taking into account the current state of knowledge and research methodology, as well as the results of scientific activity in the discipline or disciplines to which the course is assigned. In addition, the educational methods that have been implemented are student-oriented and motivate students to actively participate in the learning process. This enables them to prepare for or participate in scientific activity.

Enrollment, verification of students' learning outcomes, completion of individual semesters and years, and graduation, which is criterion No. 3, enable the monitoring of students' progress and the assessment of their achievement of learning outcomes, including preparation for scientific activity.

Educational infrastructure and resources, discussed in criterion 5, are another key aspect of integrating scientific research with the educational process. Modern equipment, access to up-to-date library and information resources, and adequate research equipment enable students to participate effectively in classes and scientific activities.

Supporting students in learning, social, scientific, or professional development and entry into the labor market, as well as the developing and improving of forms of support which is the subject of criterion 8, also plays an important role in integrating scientific research with education. Providing access to academics, various forms of support, and motivation to achieve high academic results promote their development both academically and professionally.

In conclusion, PKA's educational quality standards emphasize the need to integrate scientific research with the educational process, which not only improves the quality of education but also prepares students for active participation in scientific activities. The question arises whether and to what extent basic research is taken into account in practice in assessing the fulfillment of PKA quality criteria and standards? The answer to this question is possible by analyzing the Commission's program evaluation reports.

4 Consideration of basic research in the PKA program evaluation process – analysis of evaluation reports on the law faculty

The study's methodology was based on a detailed analysis of 36 PKA program evaluations conducted on single master's degree programs in law, at both public and non-public universities. In the case of 34 units, the evaluations covered both full-time and part-time studies, while two evaluations covered only part-time studies. The reports were obtained from a database of evaluations of universities, units and majors[26]. All reports available in the database covering PKA program evaluation processes from 2010 to 2021 were analyzed[27]. The list of reports analyzed is included in the bibliography.

The purpose of the analysis was to examine whether the evaluation of individual educational quality criteria took into account the scientific research carried out in the evaluated units, especially that financed by NCN, and how the research carried out in the evaluated units strengthened the given quality criterion.

An analysis of the reports shows that their contents do not operate with the term „basic research," instead using the term such as „research" or even more general ones such as „grant" or „project." Despite the lack of a precise indication of basic research, the optics should be taken that all references to grants, research and projects in the reports are precisely about basic research. This is because they are a key element in the development of science and an integral part of the research activities carried out by academics. Basic research contributes to expanding the frontiers of knowledge and has a direct impact on the development of the competencies and careers of academic staff. Earning additional degrees and titles necessitates active involvement in the execution of research projects, where basic research

26 Database of evaluations of universities, units and fields of study. https://pka.edu.pl/ocena/baza-uczelni-jednostek-i-kierunkow-ocenionych/#. [dostęp: 31.12.2021].

27 PKA program evaluation reports from 2010 (the border year of the establishment of the EOSW) to 2021 were analyzed. (the year prior to the implementation of the research grant: „The impact of legal basic research on legal education on the example of basic research funded by the National Science Center in Poland".

plays a pivotal role. They are also a key criterion for evaluating scientific achievements during promotions to subsequent degrees[28].

As part of the descriptions of the fulfillment of the specific criteria of program evaluation and educational quality standards, the research was directly addressed under criteria: 1,2,8, and 9. As part of the assessment of the fulfillment of criterion 1, the design of the curriculum: concept, learning objectives and learning outcomes (Table 1). The content of the reports shows that education in the field of law in the evaluated units has a clear connection with scientific activities and the research conducted takes the form of, for example, research tasks or research projects. The reports also indicate research problems or research areas on which research is focused in the evaluated units. In all the reports there is a declaration about the scientific research carried out at the law faculty. In 20% of the reports, i.e. 7 out of 36, it was confirmed that NCN-funded research was carried out, while in the remaining 80%, i.e. 29 out of 36, „research", „grants" or „projects" were declared. In the case of 22 reports, it was directly indicated that the study program and learning outcomes of the evaluated faculty are linked to the scientific research conducted. This observation indicates a positive practice in which scientific research, especially basic research, is an integral part of the educational process.

Under criterion 2 Implementation of the study program: curriculum content, schedule for the implementation of the study program and the forms and organization of classes, methods of education, professional practice, organization of the teaching and learning process (Table 1), the reports show a significant, though varied, degree of integration of scientific research into the study programs. Twenty-one reports highlighted the connection between educational content and scientific research. This observation suggests that, in the majority of degree programs evaluated, there is a deliberate and conscious integration of teaching content with the latest scientific developments. These links are crucial for maintaining the currency of the knowledge imparted and cultivating students' critical thinking and independent research abilities. It is also important to note the dissemination and implementation of scientific research results in the didactic process, as indicated in thirteen reports. Ensuring that teaching not only reflects the current state of knowledge but also actively

28 See: Andrzej Kiebała, „Kariery nauczycieli akademickich", [in:] *Szkolnictwo wyższe w Polsce. Ustrój, Prawo, Organizacja*, ed. Andrzej Rozmus, Stanisław Waltoś (Warszawa: Wolters Kluwer, 2016): 363– 388.

contributes to its transmission and further development is crucial. However, it is noteworthy that linking the content of syllabuses to ongoing research was mentioned in only six reports. Two reports explicitly indicated such a correlation, while four reports indicated recommending to students scientific studies produced as a result of ongoing research in the canon of basic and supplementary literature of the subject. This suggests that detailed inclusion of scientific research results in syllabuses is not yet a common practice. This may be due to the lack of formal mechanisms to ensure the integration of research into the teaching process at a detailed level, such as subject-specific syllabuses. Syllabuses that do not indicate mandatory and supplementary literature based on current research may limit students' opportunities to acquire the latest scientific knowledge. Within the criterion in question, 16 reports also appeared linking specialization subjects, lectures, seminars and proseminars to scientific research. These data underscore that at more advanced stages of study, where students often choose specializations, there is a correlation between the research conducted and the educational program. Particularly in seminars and proseminars, students can be directly involved in research, which promotes the development of their research competence.

Under criterion 8 on supporting students in learning, social, academic or professional development and entry into the labor market, and development and improvement (Table 1), several forms of involving students in research activities appeared. Involving students in research work was identified in thirty reports. This is a significant indicator that underscores the importance of involving students in research from the early stages of their education. Such activities not only develop students' research competencies, but also prepare them for future academic or professional careers, where research skills can be crucial Fifteen reports indicated the value of involving students in the preparation of scientific publications, which is beneficial for developing students' skills in writing and publishing scientific papers, as well as teaching them to think critically, analyze data, and express their thoughts accurately in written form. Thirteen reports indicated the inclusion of students in scientific conferences and seminars, and nine reports indicated their attendance at these events. Participation in such events allows students to gain experience in presenting research results, develop communication skills and establish contacts with other scientists, which can be crucial for their further professional development. Only four reports featured the use of tutoring/mentoring to promote research. Although less common, this is an important tool for supporting

students with a personalized approach to developing their research and scholarly interests. Ten reports found a link between the activities of study circles and research. As grassroots initiatives, study circles can provide an excellent platform to further students' research interests, and their collaboration with research teams conducting research can be mutually beneficial to both students and research teams. Only three reports showed the use of using conducted research to create teaching aids (e.g., textbooks, case studies). Such activities can significantly enrich the didactic process by combining theory with practice and current research results. Within the criterion in question, only one report showed student participation in departmental meetings, where scientific discussions of ongoing research take place. This kind of activity allows students to have a direct insight into current research problems and decision-making processes in science, to participate in scientific discussion which is an invaluable educational experience.

The last evaluation criterion under which the consideration of ongoing scientific research was observed is criterion 9 (see Table 1). This criterion pertains to the public accessibility of information concerning the study program, the conditions for its implementation, and the results achieved. Within this framework, links to research were identified in significantly fewer reports. Student access to research results on a dedicated platform was noted in only one report. Ensuring that students have ongoing access to the latest scientific developments and are able to actively use them in the learning process is an important aspect that could be more widely implemented.

A summary showing the inclusion of ongoing scientific research in program evaluation and educational quality standards in PKA reports is presented in Table 1.

Table No. 1. Inclusion of conducted research in the framework of program evaluation criteria and educational quality standards in PKA reports

Criterion of evaluation	The method of taking into account the scientific research carried out in the evaluation criterion	Number of reports
1. Study program design: concept, learning objectives and learning outcomes	– linking the study program and learning outcomes with the scientific research conducted	22
2. Implementation of the study program: curriculum content, schedule for the implementation of the study program and the forms and organization of classes, educational methods, professional practice, organization of the teaching and learning process	– linking the content of education with scientific research	21
	– dissemination and implementation of scientific research results in the teaching process„	13
	– linking the content of syllabuses with the scientific research conducted	2
	– recommending to students scientific studies produced as a result of conducted research in the canon of basic and supplementary literature of the subject	4
	– linking specialization subjects, lectures, seminars and proseminars with scientific research	16
8. Support for students in learning, social, scientific or professional development and entry into the labor market, and development and improvement of forms of support;	– involving students in research work	30
	– involving students in the preparation of scientific publications related to research	15
	– involving students in scientific conferences/ seminars related to their research	13
	– giving presentations by students at scientific conferences/seminars related to their research	9
	– use of tutoring/mentoring to promote ongoing research	
	– linking the activities of scientific circles to the research conducted	10
	– using the research conducted to create teaching aids for students (textbooks/cases)	
	– student participation in departmental meetings where scientific discussions are held about ongoing research	1
9. Public access to information about the study program, the conditions for its implementation and the results achieved;	– providing students with access to the results of ongoing scientific research (e.g., through a dedicated scientific platform)	1

Source: Own compilation based on analysis of PKA Evaluation Team Reports

5 Conclusion

The objective of the scientific article was to address the following questions: Does the law enforce the inclusion of basic research in PKA program evaluation? And does practice implement the legal requirements of including basic research in PKA program evaluation? According to the ESG Standards, legal regulations, and national-level documents, basic research is not a standalone educational quality standard. However, it is an integral component of individual standards at the European and national levels. An analysis of the inclusion of research conducted in the criteria of program evaluation and educational quality standards in PKA reports on the law faculty reveals that the degree of implementation of basic research into the educational process is insufficient. While it is an essential component in supporting student development, not all universities fully utilize this potential. Many universities do not establish sufficient links between research and the construction of study programs, curricular content or the broader didactic process, which affects the quality of education and the preparation of students for the professional challenges awaiting them in the future.

Linking basic research to the quality of education is an area where there are still more questions than answers. There are more than 400 universities in Poland, and problems concerning the quality of education often recur and do not always find effective solutions. One possible direction for improving the quality of education may be a stronger link between basic research and the teaching process. This research, being the foundation of scientific development, could play a key role in modernizing the content of teaching and inspiring students to become more involved in the scientific field. At this point, however, the closer interconnection of the issues being studied needs further refinement. It is important not only to continue research into the extent to which basic research can contribute to improving the quality of education, but also to look for opportunities to make the most of these connections in the context of improving the Polish higher education system.

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