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INNOVATIVE POTENTIAL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES ON THE EXAMPLE OF THE "ACADEMY OF INNOVATION LEADERS" PROJECT*

Introduction: In the text, we take up the issue of the innovative potential of social sciences, seemingly underestimated in the society. We analyse the possibilities of implementing projects in the field of social sciences into the non-academic world, including the commercial one. Throughout the text, we refer to the role of innovation in the society, the specificity of social innovations along with the presentation of their original scheme, as well as barriers to innovation in social sciences.
Research Aim: The aim of the undertaken analyses is to show the innovative potential of social sciences on the example of the "Academy of Innovation Leaders" project, with particular emphasis put on pedagogical sciences. We look for answers to the questions on the essence of social innovation, as well as what the innovative potential of social sciences is. How can this potential be strengthened and realised?
Evidence-based Facts: The text is based mainly on the analysis of the literature on the subject of social innovation, partly on issues related to the evaluation of scientific disciplines, as well as on our own experience related to research as part of the "Academy of Innovation Leaders" project, implemented at Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń, in the years 2022–2024. The scientific team was supposed to evaluate the project and develop a model of implementation in both social sciences and humanities.
Summary: The innovative potential of social sciences is large and untapped in the social practice. In the light of the literature on the subject and own research, the problem is the lack of awareness of its existence and readiness to use it in the social practice. The blame for this state of affairs is located both on the side of science and external entities (from the so-called "so-

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cio-economic environment"). The basic barrier to the involvement of social sciences in the socio-economic development is the belief in the superiority of basic research over the applied, or the advantage of theory over empirical research. The interrelationships between these spheres are not noticed.

Keywords: innovations, social sciences, social innovations, universities, society

INTRODUCTION

The world is changing faster than ever before, and in these changes, it seems to be more and more non-linear and unpredictable. In relation to this challenge, there is a need for rapid and effective development, not only of a man, but also the entire society. We are currently in the era of the fourth developmental discontinuity. It means that we are at the stage of transition from the economy of transformation to a group of highly developed, internationally competitive economies (Jędrzejczak & Sterniczuk, 2020). The essence of the success of this transition should be, among others, quality and innovation, and not the low price of human labour. There are also no specific guidelines that would guarantee getting into the elite group of the world's most innovative economies. Therefore, it is becoming crucial to prepare the society to both live in an innovative world and co-create it. In this context, the era of treating innovation as the effects of the thoughts of outstanding individuals, often incomprehensible to the society, is becoming a relict of the past. The same applies to the perception of innovation only in terms of content or technology. As part of the growing social needs, innovations should not only be accepted, but also co-created by the conscious society, their full-fledged beneficiary, including the scientific community.

RESEARCH AIM AND QUESTION

The aim of the article is to indicate the application possibilities of social sciences (with particular emphasis put on pedagogical sciences) in the field of introducing innovations. We are looking for answers to the questions concerning the essence of social innovation, as well as the one related to the innovative potential of social sciences. How can this potential be strengthened and realised? We are looking for answers to the first question in the in-depth literature studies. By contrast, the question about strengthening and implementing the innovative potential of scientific units is carried out in reference to the experience related to the "Academy of Innovation Leaders" (AIL) project and through the description of the own model of implementations.

The text is based on the comprehensive analysis of the literature on innovation, as well as our own experience related to the "AIL" project, implemented at

Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń, in the years 2022–2024. Our scientific team (together with Hanna Solarczyk-Szwec) aimed at evaluating the project and developing a model of implementations in social sciences and humanities. In the article, we present partial results of the conducted research in order to exemplify the problem.

STATE OF THE ART

Innovation and the society

It is emphasised that innovation is the result of social and economic development. However, the social dimension of innovation is often overlooked. Innovation is perceived as something happening outside the society, which mainly concerns technique, technology, or economy. It is not noticed that innovation "takes place" in the whole world of social practice.

The literature on the subject indicates four aspects of "leaching" the social sense of innovation, which are visible in politics and public discourse. Concurrently, emerging new phenomena and social problems are demonstrating the growing importance of the social dimension of innovation. The first aspect related to underestimating the social dimension of innovation concerns the focus of the society mainly on technological innovation. Currently, their various consequences are pointed out, as well as the increasing role of social innovation. The second concerns paying more attention to the transfer of codified knowledge and the growing importance of informal and culturally conditioned mechanisms of knowledge creation and innovation. The third aspect is related to emphasising the role of the supply side of innovation, which gives way to the demand side. Another one indicates the lack of sufficient recognition of the innovative potential of social sciences, with the existing evident examples of innovations based on knowledge in the field of social sciences. It is highlighted that the recognition of these new social dimensions of innovation is a condition for the effectiveness of policies aimed at supporting them (Bukowski et al., 2012).

In this context, the social aspects of the processes of initiating, developing, and diffusing innovation are also vital. Despite the discrepancies, technical and social innovations combine the same processes, and every technical innovation has a social dimension. Moreover, technological innovation cannot be detached from other aspects of the socio-economic life (Howaldt & Schwarz, 2010). The social sense of all innovations is contained in the fact that at the stages of creation, implementation, and diffusion, they are strictly conditioned by various social processes. This social context of the implementation process is the expression of collective subjectivity, and innovation is the result of continuous interactions between various entities and institutions (Bukowski et al., 2012).

In the classic model proposed by Rogers, diffusion is defined as the process, by which innovation is communicated among members of the social system. It distinguishes five stages. The first is knowledge, i.e. encountering innovation, the second is persuasion, which should be understood as acquiring detailed knowledge about it. Next, we are faced with a decision to reject or approve an innovation in order to move to the stage of its implementation and verification in practice. The final stage is confirmation, in which the user makes a decision concerning the need to continue utilising the innovation and its usefulness. The author, when describing the attitude to novelty over time, used the normal distribution curve, dividing people into the following groups: innovators, first followers, early majority, late majority and stragglers, among which innovators constitute the least numerous group, not exceeding 3% of the population (Rogers, 2024). As a result of the analysis of the innovation diffusion model, one can particularly see the need to build pro-innovative social attitudes that may translate into valuable innovations in the society in the future.

Already in the 1990s, Kwiatkowski emphasised that certain societies are more inventive and innovative than others, which cannot be explained solely by the wealth and availability of products, even state-of-the-art technology. Culture, the economic and political system and, above all, the educational system, as well as the demographic structure of the society, create a complex network of conditions facilitating or hindering the creation and introduction of innovations. The same conditions are transformed as a result of the feedback effect of the introduced innovations. Innovation cannot be based only on technology, but on the spread of innovative attitudes throughout the society (Kwiatkowski, 1990). Therefore, it ought to be surprising today that knowledge in the field of social sciences and humanities is not widely recognised and used as an important factor affecting innovation in the society. This applies to a social innovation, as well as, or perhaps especially, to a technical innovation.

The specificity and role of social innovation

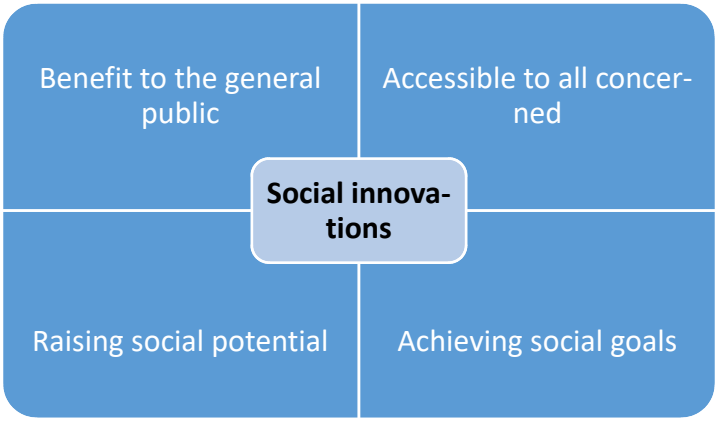
In relation to the intensification of transformations in various areas of the human life, social innovations play a pivotal role. The modern world is struggling with several growing problems concerning, among others, population ageing, climate change, security, migration, differences. The solution to these pressing social problems is related to the creation of social innovations that are based on human creativity and new ways of satisfying social needs (Kaczmarek & Tomkiewicz, 2013).

Social innovation is becoming profound for the economic growth. This is partly because some barriers to a sustainable economic growth can only be overcome with the help of social innovations. They can also be interpreted from the perspective of arousing hope and waiting for progress towards something "better" (Evers

& Fraisse, 2015). Therefore, the image of social innovations emerges as elements of a social change, simultaneously creating these changes. Wronka-Pośpiech points out that social innovations refer to unmet needs or unresolved social challenges. Hence, they can be treated as ideas allowing handling social challenges or acting for the public good, open to the wide audience (Wronka-Pośpiech, 2015). The goal of social innovations is not about market or financial profits, but the social ones (Kowalczyk & Sobiecki, 2018). In addition, social innovation itself refers to the implementations of how people are to organise interpersonal activities and interactions in order to achieve common goals (Mumford, 2002).

Kwaśnicki treats the separation of the category of social innovation with greater skepticism. He finds it difficult to operationalise and sees it more as the next phase in the development of open innovation. In this sense, only as the embodiment of open innovation, it could be part of a new paradigm. What is more, he notes deficiencies in meeting the basic assumptions of innovation, pointing out an example of social innovation, treated more like a social change (Kwaśnicki, 2013). In a certain sense, a wide range of activities referred to as social innovations escapes simple categorisation. Consequently, their fluid nature and diversity can be perceived as one of the greatest advantages of this field, when it comes to dealing with complex social problems and challenges. Thus, so far, there has been no established, unambiguous paradigm for explaining the essence of social innovations (Nicholls, 2013). The specificity of social innovations is shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1.
Social innovation: identification



Source: Authors' own study.

RESEARCH AIM AND QUESTION

What is presented below is a scheme of SCOAP NEWS as a result of literature studies and the effect of the first stage of theoretical research within the AIL project, the aim of which was to answer the following question: What is the specificity of innovation and implementation in the humanities and social sciences? The SCOAP NEWS scheme is the aftermath of in-depth literature studies. It contains all the key features of social innovations and may be used in the future research for the preliminary identification of social innovations (Figure 2).

Figure 2.
Scheme SCOAP NEWS

SOCIETY as the subject of influence	Responding to social CHALLENGES	OPENNESS of innovation
Innovation ADAPTATION	O-INNOVATIVE attitudes	Form of NOVELTY
EGALITARISM	WORLD, activities for higher purposes (public good)	SUCCESS, effectiveness

Source: Prepared by Murawska based on (Bukowski & Rudnicki, 2012; Czerwińska-Lubszczyk, 2023; Gaździcka, 2019; Howaldt & Schwarz, 2010; Jacko, 2018; Kowalczyk & Sobiecki, 2018; Olejniczuk-Merta, 2020; Wronka-Pośpiech, 2015).

The original SCOAP NEWS scheme presented in Figure 2 is an attempt to create a scheme of operationalisation and identification of social innovations, as well as a set of conditions necessary for their occurrence. SCOAP refers to the idea of Open Access Publishing (from SCOAP3), and NEWS to novelty, new quality, or a social change. Innovation, in order to be defined as social, should take into account the following factors:

S → Society is the subject of influence, it is the main beneficiary of innovation;

C →Challenges, innovation is a response to social needs;

O → Openness to innovation and the possibility of wide application;

A → Adaptation of innovation as the permanent rooting of innovation in the activities of the society members (Sztompka, 2020);

P → Pro-innovative attitude of the society, developing creativity, accepting innovations with enthusiasm and willingness to co-create them;

N → Novelty, innovation must constitute a form of novelty;

E → Egalitarianism, striving for social equality, eliminating social impacts of stratification;

W →World, acting for higher purposes, and not aiming at the profit or benefits of the elite;

S →Success, effectiveness → Innovation brings more benefits than losses, it is a change for the better.

To sum up, the basic feature of a social innovation, distinguishing it from numerous technological innovations, is the fact that they result from the collective subjectivity. They lead to such changes in the structure and quality of life that maximise the common good and they do not involve significant social costs, which are frequently an indispensable part of technological or business innovations.

EVIDENCE-BASED REVIEW

Barriers to innovation at universities

Among several features of social innovations, their weaknesses are supposed to be mentioned as well. These include the one stating that they cannot be planned with the use of specific schemes or procedures, but only thanks to creating a general "climate of cooperation and trust" (Bukowski & Rudnicki, 2014, p. 82). Social innovations arise in various areas of the social practice. In this context, it is worth looking especially at those that are created in academic centres. Universities are predisposed to create them largely due to their mission and resources, as innovation is inherent in the implementation and practical application of the discovery of something new – scientific as well.

While the relationship between science and the external environment in the context of creating technical innovations is obvious, social sciences and humanities are perceived rather as those that mainly "produce" academic knowledge, and the issues of commercialization generally do not concern them. Two issues are highlighted in the scientific and public discourse. Firstly, it is believed that overall, the humanities and social fields are impractical, and secondly, their role in the economy is insignificant. Such beliefs are not confirmed in practice.

The parameterisation of scientific disciplines in Poland in a certain sense, has "forced" and re-affirmed a huge potential inherent in these sciences and it has indicated, how they can contribute not only to the development of science, but also social practice.

As Bukowski et al. (2012) point out,

> in our country, there is a tacit assumption that knowledge in the field of humanities and social sciences has no application dimension and therefore, it is not directly applicable to the broadly understood economy. This is supported by the fact that the university humanities, to a much greater extent than natural and technical sciences, prefer basic knowledge, rarely noticing the practical dimension of what is created in academic centres. On the other hand, neither the economy nor public administration can use the resources of knowledge and skills developed in humanities faculties. (p. 19)

At the same time, it is thanks to the social sciences and humanities that we have such social and administrative solutions increasing the quality of life of peo-

ple, as Bukowski and Rudnicki (2014) note, "without philosophical and humanistic reflection as an attempt to grasp the directions of development of the modern civilisation, we would not be able to adequately assess, or even describe, the broader socio-cultural transformations, the innovativeness of which is only a small, yet essential fragment" (p. 83).

The above theses can be illustrated by giving specific instances of the use of knowledge from the social sciences and humanities in economy also on the example of the "AIL" project, which became the inspiration for writing this text, and which will be discussed in more detail below as well.

Innovative potential of social sciences and humanities

Thanks to the parameterisation of disciplines in Poland, the assessment of the impact of scientific research on the non-scientific environment has gained considerable importance in the recent years and has triggered numerous discussions around it, especially since the allocation of funds for research organisations started depending on it. In a certain sense, it has raised the position of applied research in cooperation with the socio-economic environment. Moreover, thanks to it, it has been noticed, how new products (technical and social innovations), which are the subject of scientific achievements, require a specific path, not only of application, but also describing the initial conditions and outcomes.

In the *White Paper on Innovation* (2016), the Ministry of Science and Higher Education introduced in Poland the so-called "social impact" factor (the impact of universities on the society and economy). In this regard, it was modelled, among others, on the experience of universities in the United Kingdom, where the analysis of public funds spent on science in the context of social and economic growth had started earlier. In Poland, in 2021, the first assessment (unfortunately, without testing) of that type of impact took place, and thus, in a certain sense, it also constituted the assessment of the innovativeness of scientific communities.

Academic environments, despite plenty of experience in the field of commercialisation, still lack mechanisms for cultivating and disseminating good ideas and innovations. After numerous reforms aiming at improving technology transfer, universities are just beginning to think on how to achieve equivalent social outcomes. Universities employ innovation brokers, look for ideas for social innovations and their transfers, run social laboratories, or create incubators to connect users and innovators. They take part in various competitions connecting scientists with business and teach the principles of commercialisation, both in social and exact sciences.

Research on the implementation of social innovations conducted by the Polish universities indicates that the image of their innovation potential is not homogeneous. On the basis of the obtained outcomes, nine forms directly related to the is-

sue of social innovation functioning at universities were distinguished. Innovative social projects have the largest share in the forms of university activity in the area of social innovation. Technology transfer centres and business incubators have been established at many universities. Among social innovations at universities, new specialisations, fields of study, courses, or trainings are launched as well. It is quite rare for universities to announce competitions on social innovation, or create new structures and publications (Baran et al., 2016).

In this context, the considerations of researchers who draw attention to "the lack of recognition of knowledge in the field of social sciences as an important stimulator of innovation in the society, not only in the field of social innovation, but also, among others, technological and business innovation" (Bukowski et al., 2012, p. 13) are becoming engaging. And yet, it is known that so much is happening in this area at universities, and the emerging social innovations have a huge impact on the external environment. Czerwińska-Lubszczyk (2023), analysing this phenomenon, using the method of mapping science, stated that "currently, the issue of social innovation is analysed within three main research areas: entrepreneurship, sustainable development, and social impact (in connection with the issue of higher education)" (p. 32).

Scientists from social fields create innovations related to scientific and didactic activities in the form of programmes, advisory services, or expertise that enrich processes in divergently profiled institutions, and the commercialisation potential of these products varies, depending on the market situation (Rudnicki, 2013). In turn, in the face of financial deficits in public services, as emphasised in the literature on the subject: "Social innovation can be a vital tool to counter the social challenges of an ageing population, poverty, social inequalities, social exclusion, new employment models and lifestyles, as well as citizens' expectations of social justice, health care, education, and the environment" (Czerwińska-Lubszczyk, 2023, p. 23).

Rudnicki highlights that the commercialisation of knowledge in the field of social sciences is specific. This results directly from the subject and nature of scientific research conducted within the framework of social sciences. The acquired knowledge and tools used by scientists allow modernising and optimising several technical processes, for example, those in the field of understanding consumer behaviour (Rudnicki, 2013). And this is an extraordinary opportunity to utilise this potential to create bridges and further fruitful cooperation between the university and its surroundings.

In conclusion, successful social innovations have a lasting and broad impact on the functioning of the society, although not always mass. In addition, Kwaśnicki (2013) points out that "the ability of any society to create a constant influx of social innovations, especially those stimulating the activity of the »excluded«, is a prominent factor contributing to increasing overall social and ecological resilience" (p. 16).

This is extremely profound in case of syndemia, when in the face of coexisting crises and uncertainty, it is the only sure way to deal effectively and relatively quickly with new issues.

Pedagogical sciences and innovation

A significant role in the development of innovation, among other social sciences, is played by pedagogical and cognitive sciences. It is crucial in the context of developing individual and collective creativity. Thanks to social sciences, facilities and institutions are being improved and designed to increase the quality of life, influence the politics and directions of development of the modern civilisation (Bukowski et al., 2012).

Palka writes about a creative connection between pedagogical research and school practice in his works. He points to the possibilities of the influence of theoretical, pedagogical knowledge on school practice in connection with the solved research problems. These problems are located on the theoretical-practical axis. Thus, it distinguishes the following problems: metatheoretical, theoretical, theoretical-practical, and practical (Palka, 2006). By contrast, the transfer can take place on a different path – from school practice to pedagogy. Teachers can act as pedagogical innovators and researchers (which is happening more and more frequently). Joint activities of practitioners with theoreticians can take place primarily through research activities, joint quantitative and qualitative empirical research, and research and estimation of the effects of an educational reform (Palka, 2006). Such a specific link between theoretical and practical research are educational innovations inspired by the achievements of pedagogy and other sciences, they can also provide them with research inspiration.

Analysing the development of subdisciplines in pedagogy, it can be noticed that changes in the educational reality were a decisive factor in the emergence of new ways of thinking and learning. Concurrently, most of pedagogical sub-disciplines were created in the most contemporary times, when the pace of educational transformation was the greatest.

> In relation to educational changes, pedagogical sciences are both a conditioned and a conditioning factor. On the one hand, (...) they complement specific changes in the educational reality, and on the other hand, they are a factor stimulating planned transformations within the educational system. Thus, the bond between the practice of learning about educational reality and the practice of transforming it constitutes a mutual relationship. It is both a genetic and functional bond. (Schulz, 1980, pp. 265–266)

Compelling reasons, why education researchers ought to be interested in the experience of the British REF assessment, exist. Firstly, reports of the so-called "influences" are the information on the most valued educational research of each

British university in the years 2014–2021. By analysing them, we are able to understand, what topics British scientists have focused on, what theoretical perspectives and methodological approaches are most frequently utilised, and where there are gaps. Secondly, the expert panel consisted of experts, whose task was to verify a large number of educational research outcomes in order to accurately estimate their quality. With this assessment, it is feasible to understand the strengths and weaknesses of the contemporary British educational research. Thirdly, it can compare these assessments over the years (Inglis et al., 2024). It is worth utilising this experience in the future in Poland, in order to demonstrate the innovative potential that lies in educational research as well.

AIL project as an example of an initiative supporting social innovation

Social innovations at the university were to be met by a pilot of the AIL, carried out in the years 2022–2024 at Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń. Academy of Innovation Leaders' goal was to support the innovative potential of social sciences and humanities by increasing the quality and breakthrough nature of the scientific research that would meet the current needs of both the society and economy (https://cpatt.umk.pl/akademia-liderow-innowacji/).

The project assumed the selection of research teams liable for the development and implementation of research grants, which, under the supervision of innovation brokers and mentors, were working on developing the concept of social innovation, adapted to the needs of the market, and participating in a series of thematic trainings. In the project, we assumed, in accordance with the theses presented in the text, that each innovation, regardless of its type, has a social dimension, but the distinctiveness of innovations in social sciences is indicated, among others, by their inclusiveness (an inclusive nature), compatibility with the value system of the society, response to social challenges, openness to all potentially interested beneficiaries, creating opportunities, or acting for higher goals.

The whole project was about encouraging researchers to utilise research experience for practical activities aiming at cooperation between the scientific communities and the market, as well as directing the effects of their activities to the society. It could contribute to the development of the application nature of the research in the future, strengthen the cooperation of scientific units with the external environment, and help in meeting successfully the third parameterisation criterion.

In addition to the teams creating grants, parallel activities of the scientific support team of the "AIL" project (to which the authors of this article belonged together with Hanna Solarczyk-Szwec) were conducted. The team's task was to perform a research analysis of AIL itself, including the specificity of social innovations, the implementation experience of scientists, as well as the course of the very project. The team was working on recognising the specificity of

innovations and implementations in the humanities and social sciences, learning about experience related to social implementations at Nicolaus Copernicus University. All activities served to develop a research report, as well as a model of social implementations in the field of social sciences and humanities. The analysis of the project stages and the specificity of the implementation at the university allowed for a practical insight into the possibilities of implementing social innovations by scientists, in real cooperation with the environment and entrepreneurs.

The analysis of implementation projects carried out at Nicolaus Copernicus University under the third parameterisation criterion showed a repertoire of possibilities for commercial use of the potential of social sciences and humanities. Our research indicates that many of the activities undertaken by academics may be of an implementation character, and the non-academic world is highly interested in them. The products that social sciences can offer include scientific or didactic aids, games, training, expertise, as well as new methods of work and teaching (Rudnicki, 2011). However, the analysis of the conducted interviews and surveys indicated not only many possibilities, but also a number of limitations. In order to answer the question about the implementation experience of scientists from Nicolaus Copernicus University, a questionnaire was created, which was addressed to all teams of university employees achieving implementations in the last parameterisation (the survey was conducted between November 2022 and June 2023. Out of 35 teams, 16 responded to the survey, which represented a return rate of 46%). Academics who decided to go outside the university walls with their ideas pointed to a number of factors hindering the implementation of innovation. Almost all respondents indicated a high need for allocating plenty of time to achieving implementations (over 90%), which oftentimes hindered the effective implementation of other professional duties (over 75%). Half of the researchers pointed to the insufficient level of support from the organisational units of the university. Everyone emphasised that achieving implementations ought to be associated with appropriate appreciation in the unit, as well as potential gratification. Over 80% of respondents indicated that social impact is a crucial outcome of the scientific work. Nevertheless, many of them do not feel appreciated in these terms.

In order to deepen our knowledge of the specific needs and experience of the staff responsible for the implementations, we conducted five interviews partially directed to those involved in the implementations at the university. During the interviews, the respondents highlighted that it is worth monitoring the potential of the discipline in the context of the market demand, as well as noticing the implementation possibilities of the scientific research. The respondents pointed out that implementations are always a process that requires extensive analysis. They also stressed the insufficient interest of the environment in implementations and

a small team to help (sometimes a single-person or a double one), bureaucracy, or the time cost of implementation.

Table 1.
Opportunities and limitations of implementing social innovations to scientific units

Chances	Limitations
Social demand for innovation (increase in social challenges and problems)	Overburdening scientists with responsibilities
Personnel potential of scientific units	Other mechanisms of action of enterprises
Openness of companies/incubators to research projects	Personnel problems of scientific units (usually the maximum of 2–3 people to work on an implementation)
Analytical competence of employees, ability to conduct the scientific research	Time pressure
Projects to encourage and enable researchers to carry out activities for the benefit of the society	The need to strive for contacts, a divergent language of description of the reality
	Lack of self-promotion skills

Source: Authors' own study.

Despite the limitations, numerous of the projects achieved impressive outcomes, not only in the context of expert assessment, but above all, in the social dimension. Among the projects appreciated in the parameterisation in the field of social sciences, there were, among others, original thanatopedagogical therapy in working with chronically and terminally ill children; a tool for studying the speech acquisition process, which in the future is to help in communication with people utilising only glance; implementations and legal research in the field of cybercrime; improvement in the field of NCF contactless payments in Europe, or a strategy for professional activation of the unemployed 50+ for public employment services. In turn, the humanities appreciated, among others, activities in the field of raising the level of early medieval historical reenactment (the reproduction of early medieval axes and their commercialisation); increasing accessibility and awareness of underwater, cultural heritage and its protection, or promoting the heritage of old, Polish cuisine.

In the evaluation of the projects, the experts drew attention to the following aspects, which constituted the essence of implementation and its impact for them:

- interdisciplinarity (cooperation of entities from various disciplines, and preferably different fields, e.g. pedagogy plus medicine, economics plus computer science, etc.), quoting the evaluating experts: "the interdisciplinarity of the research consisted in the need to reach for methods from various sciences";

- a wide range of impact (preferably international or nationwide), quoting the evaluating experts "the international range of impact is beyond doubt. Not only is it about the geographical sense, but the completeness and entireness of embracing the phenomenon";
- the relationship of the implementation with the scientific research conducted by the submitting entity (all supported by publications), quoting the evaluating experts, "there is a clear cause and effect relationship between the research conducted by X and the declared social impact";
- evidence of social impact did not arise only for the purposes of evaluation, quoting evaluating experts, "the evidence added to the description of impact arose spontaneously and it is reliable";
- reaching a large group of beneficiaries and identifying them, quoting the evaluating experts, "the description of the impact also very precisely defines the groups of specific beneficiaries and the benefits and effects of the social impact they have achieved";
- responding to social needs, quoting evaluating experts, "the solutions are long-term and they solve a problem that has existed for a long time";
- the importance of the implementation for the society, quoting the evaluating experts, "while the importance of impact is assessed as »breakthrough« for the society due to the change in the conditions and comfort of life and health of the identified beneficiaries".

Plenty of these activities were interdisciplinary and resulted from several years of work, as well as intensive cooperation with entities and the creation of an extensive network of contacts. The need for social innovation and the use of social science research to change the reality is no longer in doubt. However, it is worth thinking about improvements that would help develop this axis. Bureaucratisation, overloading with obligations, or creating innovations in their own, hermetic environment certainly do not facilitate this.

Proposal for a model of social implementations for universities

The project also resulted in the development of a model of social implementations in the field of social sciences and humanities. The first stage was to examine the specificity of innovation in the social sciences on the basis of the literature on the subject. As a result of this analysis, the SCOAP NEWS scheme was created, which can be utilised in the analysis of identification and the specificity of social innovations. At the second stage, the research was carried out on experience related to social implementations from Nicolaus Copernicus University. The outcomes and experience resulting from the entire project allowed developing a model of social implementations at the University. The most vital elements of this model are as follows:

- building project teams (for the purposes of the third criterion of the unit evaluation);
- initiation of activities and care of the Centre for Academic Entrepreneurship and Technology Transfer of Nicolaus Copernicus University (a unit supporting researchers in moving research outside the university walls, support in team building, commercialisation of research, support for researchers' entrepreneurship);
- implementation of a training for the members of research teams and interested parties, including team building, role in the team, design thinking, financing and commercialisation of innovative projects, self-promotion;
- advising of an innovation broker at all stages of the project;
- a special list, the so-called "check list", was created, which contains the most vital issues that should be included in the impact descriptions, e.g. keywords, appropriate wording, titles, description of beneficiaries, etc.;
- development of gratification forms for teams dealing with implementations;
- work on eliminating long-term bureaucratic processes of universities that could discourage the non-academic world from cooperating with researchers.

SUMMARY

The innovative potential of social sciences is large and insufficiently utilised in the social practice. A significant problem is the lack of awareness of its existence and readiness to use it. The blame for this state of affairs lies both on the side of science and economy. The literature emphasises that the basic barrier to the involvement of social sciences in economy is that academics assign a higher rank to basic research than to the applied one. The relationship between scientific knowledge and its application to social practice is not always noticed. This is largely due to the isolation of social sciences from economy and the sense of relative security enjoyed by social sciences and humanities faculties on the scientific market. Concurrently, the state plays a large role in this game, which, through its legislation and financial incentives, strengthens or weakens this cooperation. As a result of this isolation, academicism is growing, and the policy and financing of the state towards universities strengthens these attitudes. In the case of social sciences, local governments play a prominent role, but also foundations and organisations that raise funds for the process of commercialisation of educational projects (e.g. Ashoka, POPOJUTRZE Foundation).

The remedy for this state of affairs are changes that will provide universities with greater autonomy and flexibility in organisational and financial terms. In the literature on the subject, but also in our research within AIL, it is underlined that

when assessing the academic staff, greater emphasis is to be placed on appreciating their participation in application research and cooperation with the socio-economic environment. Moreover, despite the original concerns related to the parametrisation of the university, it has a chance to become a catalyst for these changes in the future (Bukowski et al., 2012).

CONCLUSION

The analysis of the subject literature and parametric assessment, including implementation projects at Nicolaus Copernicus University under the third parameterisation criterion, showed the real possibilities of commercial use of the potential of social sciences, including educational sciences. It turned out that many of the activities undertaken by academics can, and even in numerous cases should, be of an implementation nature. The social environment, including the economic one, is extremely interested in social innovations. Products that the social sciences and humanities can offer can help solve several pressing social, economic, and political problems. It is worth increasing the awareness of both business and academics in the field of social innovations. In this area, we are observing slow changes and increasingly noticing that innovation, including the social one, is becoming a vital factor in the social and economic development.

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INNOWACYJNY POTENCJAŁ NAUK SPOŁECZNYCH NA PRZYKŁADZIE PROJEKTU „AKADEMIA LIDERÓW INNOWACJI"

Wprowadzenie: W tekście podjęto problematykę niedocenianego w społeczeństwie, innowacyjnego potencjału nauk społecznych. Analizujemy możliwości implementacji projektów z zakresu nauk społecznych do świata pozaakademickiego, w tym komercyjnego. W całości tekstu odnosimy się do roli innowacji w społeczeństwie, specyfiki innowacji społecznych wraz z prezentacją ich autorskiego schematu, a także barier innowacyjności w naukach społecznych.
Cel badań: Celem podjętych analiz jest ukazanie innowacyjnego potencjału nauk społecznych na przykładzie projektu „Akademia Liderów Innowacji", ze szczególnym uwzględnieniem nauk pedagogicznych. Poszukujemy odpowiedzi na pytania o istotę innowacji społecznych, a także o to, jaki jest innowacyjny potencjał nauk społecznych oraz w jaki sposób można ten potencjał wzmacniać i realizować?
Stan wiedzy: W tekście bazujemy głównie na analizie literatury przedmiotu z zakresu innowacji społecznych, częściowo problematyki związanej z ewaluacją dyscyplin naukowych, a także na własnych doświadczeniach związanych z badaniami w ramach projektu „Akademia Liderów Innowacji", realizowanego w Uniwersytecie Mikołaja Kopernika w Toruniu w latach 2022–2024. Zespół naukowy miał dokonać ewaluacji projektu oraz wypracowanie modelu wdrożeń w naukach społecznych i humanistycznych.
Podsumowanie: Innowacyjny potencjał nauk społecznych jest duży i niewykorzystany w praktyce społecznej. W świetle literatury przedmiotu oraz badań własnych problem stanowi brak świadomości jego istnienia i gotowości wykorzystania go w praktyce społecznej. Winę za ten stan rzeczy sytuuje się zarówno po stronie nauki, jak i podmiotów zewnętrznych (z tzw. otoczenia społeczno-gospodarczego). Podstawową barierą zaangażowania nauk społecznych w rozwój społeczno-gospodarczy jest przeświadczenie o wyższości badań podstawowych nad stosowanymi czy przewadze teorii nad badaniami empirycznymi. Nie dostrzega się wzajemnych związków pomiędzy tymi sferami.

Słowa kluczowe: innowacje, nauki społeczne, innowacje społeczne, uczelnie wyższe, społeczeństwo