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Investment in Career Capital as an Important Factor in the Individual's Employability Development: Educational Challenges

ABSTRACT

The increasing flexibility and uncertainty of permanent employment as well as the complexity of career paths in the modern labor market makes the ability to acquire, maintain and change employment in the long term critically important. In a situation in which a professional career is perceived as a status owned by an individual, it is worth looking at factors determining employability in the individual and social dimension. All the entity's activities aimed at investing in shaping their professional future have measurable value for increasing its competitiveness on the labor market, which is not without significance for building career capital. The aim of the article is to present the assumptions of the modern concept of employability and its importance for the individual's career capital. The article also attempts to analyze the tasks set for education in the area of employability development of young people preparing to take up professional activity.

Keywords:

career capital, employability, labor market, educational challenges

INTRODUCTION

The modern labor market is constantly fluctuating, which makes it difficult to predict the course of a human career. The professional biography of the subject is conditioned not only by individual factors, such as the level of activity and

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mobility manifested, or the qualifications and competences possessed, but also external factors, such as the current economic situation in the country, economic innovativeness, demography, or the inflation rate. The unit is obliged to undertake projects enhancing its employment attractiveness, *inter alia*, through the development of competences, networking and the improvement of self-promotional skills in the world of work. This task is not always the easiest one due to the competency gap resulting from the mismatch between the educational offer and the needs of the labor market, and thus – the surplus of people with higher or under-education and their qualifications inadequate to the current requirements. The uncertainty of the professional situation of a human being contributes to emphasizing in many theoretical terms that it is the individual who becomes the planning, monitoring and managing entity of his own career, caring for the renewable and permanent building of his career capital (Bańka, 2016b; Myszka, 2015; Cybal-Michalska, 2012; Sullivan & Arthur, 2006; Dickmann & Harris, 2005).

Due to changes in the labor market, the issue of employability, *i.e.*, individual resources that determine success in finding a job, remains constantly valid. Eurostat statistics indicate that the unemployment rate in the European Union countries remained at the level of 7.1% at the end of June 2020.² Data from the Central Statistical Office indicate that the unemployment rate in Poland at the end of December 2019 was 5.2% of the professionally active civilian population.³ In turn, the end of June 2020 showed an unemployment rate of 6.1%.⁴ These results prove a relatively good situation on the labor market, which makes it possible to consider the discussion on seeking employment by people of working age as not very heated. However, bearing in mind the epidemiological situation caused by the spread of the SARS-CoV-2 coronavirus and the COVID-19 disease it causes, it should be forecasted that in the near future the percentage of unemployed will increase. Moreover, it is worth emphasizing that the unemployment situation affects mainly young people starting their activity in the world of work,⁵ therefore, this article focuses on the development of youth employability. Studies on the concept of employability may bring benefits not only for the supply and demand side of

2 https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Unemployment_statistics

3 The term ‘economically active civilian population’ is understood as “persons working in public and private sector entities, as well as unemployed persons” (Pasierowska, Strużyńska, & Cendrowska, 2020, p. 5).

4 <https://stat.gov.pl/obszary-tematyczne/rynek-pracy/bezrobocie-rejestrowane/bezrobotni-zarejestrowani-i-stopa-bezrobocia-stan-w-koncu-marca-2020-r,-2,92.html>

5 At the end of 2019, the most numerous group among the unemployed were people aged 25–34, which meant 27.3% of the total number of unemployed (Pasierowska et al., 2020, p. 11).

the labor market, but also, consequently, allow for the determination of certain educational implications.

EMPLOYABILITY: WAYS OF UNDERSTANDING, DIMENSIONS, DETERMINANTS

The issues addressed are characterized by a certain complexity resulting mainly from various approaches and methods of defining employability. Trying to organize them may be a challenge due to the ambiguity of many positions and adopting different theoretical perspectives in them. One of the reasons for such a state of affairs can be seen at the level of the naming of the employability concept itself, resulting from the difficulty in finding an appropriate Polish equivalent for English *employability*. Therefore, in Polish literature you can find such defined categories as: career potential (Świgoń, 2014a; Nawrocka, Kramer, & Korcz, 2019), the ability to find employment (Kabaj, 2012), employment potential (Sławecki, 2012; Paszkowicz, 2008), or employment attractiveness (Sienkiewicz, 2010; Mazurek-Kucharska, 2011; Szulc, 2015). The method of determining employability is also determined by the subject to which it relates. The existing solutions consider it from the point of view of young people completing formal education, people with disabilities, the unemployed and employed, and organizations, considering it in the micro- and macroeconomic, social, group and individual context, adopting specific positions on the issue of taking up their first job, returning to it or maintaining it as well as maintaining competitiveness on the labor market (Wiśniewska, 2015; Jeruszka, 2019; Paszkowicz, 2008). In addition, there are three perspectives for analyzing this construct: related to the government employment policy, human resource management strategies and optics adopted by employers, and related to the education sector and its tasks of preparing young people to enter the labor market (Świgoń, 2014a). The indicated aspects prove the necessity to undertake procedures leading to a more in-depth diagnosis of employability due to the unification of the way it is defined, but also to specify its dimensions and determinants, in order to clarify its significance for the career capital of an individual and recognize their readiness to work.

Bernard Gazier (2001) provides an interesting cognitive review of the development of the employability concept. In the opinion of this French economist, the sources of these approaches should be sought at the beginning of the 20th century, when employability was considered from the *dichotomic employability* perspective, including people able and willing to work, and unemployed (unable to

work), focusing on the analysis of factors conditioning their professional situation. Subsequent debates over the analyzed category evolved towards the concept of socio-medical employability, manpower policy employability, flow employability, labor market performance employability, initiative employability, and interactive employability. The last one emphasizes the importance of involvement of an individual in the course of their career and their skills, which are closely related to the current situation on the labor market – employment policy and activation programs for the unemployed.

The way of understanding ‘employability’ has therefore evolved from interpreting it as the ability of a person to be employed, or having psychophysical and situational (e.g., family) predispositions to consider it as a certain individual property conditioning competitiveness on the labor market, and therefore having competences sought by potential employers or possible to use for self-employment (Baňka, 2006). This perspective has serious implications for specifying the role of the subject in shaping one’s own professional biography, and thus for formulating the goals of education. A person focused on achieving an established position on the labor market is obliged not only to feel responsible for managing and monitoring his own career, but also to have skills that develop employability. In turn, the teleological educational assumptions should include the creation of situations resulting in the improvement of competences such as adaptability, strategic thinking, proactivity or prodevelopment.

L. Dacre Pool and P. Sewell define employability as “having a set of skills, knowledge, understanding and personal attributes that make a person more likely to choose and secure occupations in which they can be satisfied and successful” (2007, p. 280). On the other hand, Y. Wang and C. Tsai (2014), in the way they construct this category, emphasize that it is important for the choice of career and free movement in the labor market, and affects the development of the individual, the quality of professional duties performed by them, commitment to work, a sense of fulfillment and use of personal potential. With regard to graduates entering the labor market, M. Yorke (2006) points to individual skills and characteristics that increase the likelihood of young people finding employment and achieving success in their careers, which brings benefits not only for the entity itself, but also for the entire society⁶. The above-mentioned definitions show that employability can be perceived as a relative ability (possibility) to be employed, a set of features

⁶ It is a definition created by ESECT (Enhancing Student Employability Co-ordination Team). In the original wording: “Employability is a set of achievements, skills, understandings and personal attributes that make graduates more likely to gain employment and be successful in their chosen occupation” (<https://www.qualityresearchinternational.com/esectools/definition.php>).

and skills leading to finding and keeping a job, and the ability to independently navigate the labor market.

Employability can be viewed in various dimensions. The subjective dimension refers to the individual capabilities of the subject, such as: knowledge, skills, qualifications, or strategies used in the job search process, as well as to the manner of their perception and attitude towards them. In turn, objective employability is related to factors independent of the human, such as: current expectations of employers, adequacy of qualifications to the situation on the labor market, prestige of education (Bańka, 2016b, p. 36). This distinction is supplemented by the types of employability: initiatory (characterizing people completing the stage of formal education who are predisposed to take up their first job), internal (relating to promotion and increasing the scope of responsibility taking place within one organization), and external (related to taking up employment with various employers and at various positions) (Hofaidhllaoui, 2013, pp. 25–26).

M. Yorke and P.T. Knight (2004) indicate four components of employability (acronym USEM): *understanding*, *skills*, *efficacy beliefs*, *metacognition*. J. Hillage and E. Pollard (1998) indicate on four other components of its composition, such as: employability assets, i.e. the knowledge, skills and attitudes of an individual, *deployment*, relating to the ability to manage one's own professional development, *presentation* of their person in front of potential employers, *job getting skills*, including writing application documents. Researchers point out that they should be analyzed in the context of personal circumstances, e.g., the current family situation and conditions on the modern labor market. Phillip Brown, Anthony Hesketh and Sara Williams also look at the duality of employability (2003, p. 120). The first aspect relates to individual attributes that determine employment, such as accumulated educational capital, skills, or involvement in planning one's own professional career and performing duties in a given workplace. The second dimension concerns the laws of supply and demand governing the functioning of the labor market. Therefore, it is responsible for the actual confrontation of an individual's resources with the current situation related to job positions offered by employers and the number of people having the appropriate qualifications to take them. In a situation of universal access to education, and, consequently, of people having comparable educational capitals, the factor differentiating the employability of potential candidates is their social and cultural capital, which may constitute a competitive value on their path to professional success (Tomlinson, 2008).

The employability model constructed by L. Dacre Pool and P. Sewell (2007) is also worth noting. Researchers analyze employability on two levels. The higher of them includes such skills as *self-efficacy*, *self-confidence*, and *self-esteem*, how-

ever, *reflection and evaluation* of experiences gained at a lower level are of key importance for their development. The lower level components are, respectively: 1. *Career Development Learning*, 2. *Experience of Work & Life*, 3. *Degree Subject Knowledge, Understanding & Skills*, 4. *Generic Skills*, otherwise understood as key or transferable skills, and 5. *Emotional Intelligence*.⁷ This model is an example of a tool that can be used in the process of preparing curricula or initiatives aimed at developing employability, as it indicates which areas of individual development should be included in them.

Employability is therefore manifested in the individual's traits, skills, knowledge, attitudes and beliefs, ways of behavior, coping with the changes and presenting their attributes in the labor market, which may increase their chances of obtaining and maintaining employment and experience job satisfaction. Investments in the development increase the professional attractiveness of the entity and its competences in terms of adapting to changing conditions in work environments and the productive use of available resources. One should bear in mind the dynamic nature of employability, which makes the skills possessed by an individual have a variable value in the labor market. This means that at a certain point in time they may be a guarantee of obtaining employment, while at another point they may lose their importance (Clarke, 2008). The liquidity of employment attractiveness will have an impact on career capital, which, due to the impact of various individual conditions and external contextual factors, will also be characterized by volatility.

INVESTMENT IN CAREER CAPITAL

Each type of capital is the result of past or present activities of the entity that can be used in the future and therefore is assigned an investment and revolving value. According to A. Bańka, the concept of career capital should be understood as “accumulated competences that an individual acquires in the course of education, work, life experience, social and cultural experience” (Bańka, 2006, p. 80). In another publication, the same author defines career capital as “the subjective perceived value of human resources (competences) enabling the establishment and maintenance of an individual's employability” (Bańka, 2016b, p. 64). This definition shows important links between career capital and human employability. A similar observation is made by E. Turska, who emphasizes that “capital con-

7 These factors can be combined with the abbreviation CareerEDGE.

sists of important assets or advantages that enable undertaking activity aimed at maintaining or increasing the position and prestige held, and such that allows for more effective and efficient functioning in everyday social, cultural, political and economic reality” (Turska, 2014, p. 35).

According to M. Lamb, career capital includes: qualifications and education, technical skills, functional skills, competences and possibilities (2007, p. 90). The researcher also points out that the distinctive components of career capital, which are recognizable in the modern world of work and knowledge-based economy, are a high level of adaptability to changes, emotional maturity and internal locus of control, the ability to use past professional experiences, entrepreneurial thinking, qualifications perceived as potential, sense of duty and action orientation, a wide network of international contacts, a sense of personal worth and the ability to identify opportunities for personal development (Lamb, 2007, p. 73). Due to the multidimensionality of *career capital*, its various forms are indicated, which include human capital and agentic/developmental capital, network capital, otherwise known as social capital and information capital. P. Bohdziewicz in the proprietary model of individual career capital lists five of its separate values: individual talent resources, *habitus* (the result of professional and life experiences gained in the course of socialization), information capital (knowledge and professional skills), social capital (contacts established with the professional community), capital of intermediary skills (a set of competences enabling the accumulation of information and social capital) (Bohdziewicz, 2012, pp. 298–301).

The structure of career capital is characterized by significant flexibility, which means that it can change, i.e., decrease, increase, be modified. It is worth noting, however, that its individual components are characterized by a certain susceptibility to change. This means that while knowledge, qualifications and skills are relatively easy to obtain, adopting a different system of values and beliefs or modifying certain innate predispositions will be very difficult or impossible. Career capital is shaped in specific macro-social realities, which proves the importance of the social context, such as interpersonal relations or institutional socialization. The course of the professional career is also influenced by other factors not always dependent on the subject. However, each person has the opportunity to consciously and purposefully invest in a specific type of capital.

A. Bańka distinguishes two basic investment strategies in career capital: *present strategy*, and *investment strategy* (2016b, pp. 82–85). The first one is aimed at obtaining immediate gratuities for the expenditures made for professional development. According to the aforementioned researcher, it is characterized by people who have high social expectations as to their position. The way they oper-

ate finds its application in the traditional career model rather than in the unpredictable conditions of today. In turn, the *investment strategy* is characteristic of people ready to long-term expectation of future profits, open to experimenting in the area of career, able to cope with changes and proactively striving to implement the adopted assumptions. Individuals operating under this strategy take into account the risk of failure and are distinguished by a sense of responsibility for their own future. The activities performed under the investment project may be directed at various levels of professional participation of the entity: enterprise, profession (performed or new), education (professional development), area of social life. It is worth noting that convincing a person about having a subjective power of agency increases his involvement in facing challenges and contributes to the accumulation of experience and skills that increase the value of their career capital and thus increase their employment attractiveness. Thanks to this, they become the authors of their own professional biography (Savickas, 2011, pp. 179–181).

TRANSITIONAL CAREER CAPITAL

A. Bańka points out that the paradigm of an individual's professional development includes transitions, which always take place at the moment of transition on the career path, e.g., from an unemployed person to employment, from part-time to full-time work, from one career stage to the other, or from a specific social role to another (Bańka, 2016a). A young person experiences a triple transition not only from the area of education to the labor market and from adolescence to adulthood (Cybal-Michalska, 2013, p. 109 et seq.), but also the dominant plane of formal education to non-formal education, which is a test for self-education skills. In a transition situation, the individual skills of the entity are verified and their qualifications are compared with the current requirements of the labor market. It can therefore be regarded as a kind of test for the actual employability of a person.

With reference to the previous considerations, it is worth referring to the category of transition career capital characteristic of young people preparing for active participation in the labor market. It is one of the types of career capital, and its components are transitional educational capital, transitional work experience capital, transitional entrepreneurial capital, transitional language capital, transitional cultural capital, transitional social capital (Barwińska-Małajowicz, 2015, p. 382). In the current of career development concepts, in which it is considered a lifelong process, the transition to the labor market is considered to be one of the moments of key importance in the professional biography of a person. In counseling reflection,

transition is defined as “various phenomena of continuity disturbances in the life of individuals” (Guichard & Huteau, 2005, p. 8), “transition from one existential situation to another” (Rożnowski, 2009, p. 21), or “sequence of processes (dimensions) of accumulation of life competences” (Bańka, 2003, p. 20). Therefore, it applies to all situations in which the subject is obliged to change his behavior, way of thinking, or choose a different course of action. The process of transition from education to the labor market requires a young person to learn new competences and acquire new qualifications, which may prove useful in a previously unknown space. Despite the fact that the vocational orientation process conducted in schools is aimed at learning about the labor market and developing skills that may prove useful in it, it is faced with the task of redefining its social role and finding a new place in the world, which in turn is to lead to achieving independence characteristic of adults.

The basic sources of transitional career capital are education and individual experiences gained in the course of their participation on the social, economic, cultural and institutional levels. It is impossible to ignore the issue that in many biographies of young people one can see the disappearance of a clear line between studying and professional activity, as evidenced by their practice of combining studies with work (Jacob & Weiss, 2008, p. 30). Universal access to educational institutions means that many of them are distinguished by a similar educational capital determined by the type of university, degree of completed studies, therefore qualitative indicators such as achieved results in the form of assessments, skills or activities undertaken in self-education (Piróg, 2013, p. 132). The individual involvement of the subject in the transition process, manifested in his aspirations, motivation, gaining additional experience or the goal he has, is also important. Transitional career capital is therefore a kind of multi-stage and complex process taking the form of an individual’s original project.

The constant fluctuations, the emergence of new professional specializations, changes in employment conditions and the dynamics of transformations taking place on the modern labor market imply the perception of the subjective dimension of career capital shaped over the course of life in terms of a “series of transitions” (Giddens, 2001, pp. 110–111). The ability to deal with various types of transitions becomes an inseparable element of the crystallization of one’s own “I” by a person. The consequences of the individualization of professional resources can be seen in the subjective decisions of an individual, which gives a career a peculiar shade. This aspect of transitional career capital is pointed out by James Côté in his *identity capital model*, in which he points to the importance of personal properties optimizing the development of an individual and its adaptation possibilities to the

conditions of the labor market (Côté, 2005). Among these features, he mentions the internal locus of control, a sense of purpose in life, self-reflection and decision-making skills, awareness of responsibility for the course of one's own career development path. This researcher notices a significant relationship between identity and social capital. It proves that personal resources can contribute to easier adaptation of a person to specific working conditions, and that an individual functioning in safe conditions based on community will be distinguished by a greater sense of agency and striving to achieve the set goals. In this approach, employability will be considered as one of the dimensions of the social structure of identity and individual adjustment of one's own aspirations to the current opportunities on the labor market.

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN EMPLOYABILITY AND CAREER CAPITAL: DISCUSSION

Employability can be understood as an opportunity to pursue various forms of professional activity aimed at returning investments made in career capital. Return on investment should be understood as any benefits experienced by an individual in the form of professional satisfaction, job security, financial gratification, independence or prestige in a given field. By participating in the educational process and social life as well as undertaking various activities, they gather competences important from the perspective of building their "individual competitiveness" on the labor market, which in turn contribute to the accumulation of career capital (Bohdziewicz, 2012, p. 293). The basic concepts relating to it: *Knowing-why*, *Knowing-how*, and *Knowing-whom* (DeFillippi & Arthur, 1994, 1996), constitute the foundation of human employability. They indicate which sources of knowledge should be used to shape specific skills, what is the foundation of professional excellence and what interpersonal relations are significant for the process of developing one's own career. K. Inkson and M. Arthur (2001) propose to extend the range of these dimensions by three more types of knowledge: *Knowing when*, *Knowing where*, *Knowing what*. They are to be helpful in choosing the right moment for taking specific actions in a given area of the labor market, using the appropriate opportunities and opportunities in this process. In turn, M. Lamb and M. Sutherland (2010) add emotional maturity and intelligence as knowing-oneself to these concepts. These researchers also point to two types of career capital. One of them is related to the resources that an individual must have (*must have*), and the other relates to their knowledge and skills considered as welcome in the labor market

(*nice to have*). This distinction may be helpful in the analysis of individual aspects of employability, because the employment attractiveness of an entity in specific industries is determined both by the properties commonly required in a given area, as well as its peculiarities, which additionally strengthen its employment competitiveness.

Dispositional employability (Fugate & Kinicki, 2008), which determines the proactive behavior of an individual, is of significant importance for the development of career capital. It emphasizes the aspect of coping by the subject in the labor market space by activating resources allowing him to recognize and use the opportunities to implement his own vision of professional development. It is related to the phenomenon of externalization of employment, which consists in transferring responsibility for one's professional development from the organization to the employee. Instability of the level of employment attractiveness of an individual contributes to the accumulation of various skills, knowledge and experience, which become the basis of its professional profile, which determines its prestige and reputation on the labor market as a professional in a given area (Tomaszewska-Lipiec, 2016, pp. 146–147). Admittedly, this regularity does not guarantee her permanent professional position, but it increases the probability of maintaining career continuity. Individualization of a person's professional resources and the accompanying efforts aimed at their improvement make their career capital take on a peculiar character. In this approach, career capital becomes “a subjective concept reflecting in the mind of an individual the diagnosis and forecast of accumulated personal resources” (Bańka, 2016b, p. 72).

In the context of the deliberations, it is worth mentioning the concept of *professional capital* by Michael Fullan and Andy Hargreaves (2012), which, although it was developed with the teaching profession in mind, can be successfully applied to every person striving to achieve mastery in a given profession. In its assumption, professional capital is a product of *human capital*, *social capital*, and *decisional capital*. All the indicated types of capital in this approach are perceived as individual resources based on the self-educational and proactive abilities of the subject, and their possession is intended to increase their chances of achieving professional success. It is worth emphasizing, however, that despite the individual shading of professional capital, effective results of its development should be expected when it is shaped in the space of social learning and a sense of mutual responsibility of all entities participating in the process of its crystallization (Fullan, Rincón-Gallardo, & Hargreaves, 2015).

Human capital is associated with human cognitive skills, and therefore with the creation and modification of knowledge that is relevant at a given time, in

accordance with the domain of “here and now”. As a consequence, the information obtained is to contribute to changes in various aspects of an individual’s functioning (e.g., attitude, value system, behavior) and result in certain benefits in the future. One can see its relationship with proactivity, because it incorporates the ability to recognize development prospects and “reflectively engage in solving problems encountered on an ongoing basis” (Bańka, 2015, p. 98). Social capital concerns interpersonal competences, such as establishing and maintaining relationships, team cooperation, networking, that are not irrelevant to achieving and maintaining a specific professional position, or the presentation of resources. In turn, the decision capital is responsible for independent decision-making by the entity based on previously made independent and critical judgments. It can be seen as a complementary property, and at the same time being the result of the other two types of capital, because based on the acquired knowledge and built social position, the individual makes choices leading to the implementation of the adopted plans. Therefore, it is characterized not only by the cognitive dimension, but also by the behavioral one. One of the constructive features of professional capital is the continuous human development linked to the implementation of the principle of permanent learning (Rosalska, 2013, p. 202). This type of capital is essential for career capital and the development of an individual’s employability. It determines the effectiveness of efforts to shape the professional path and reflects the degree of resourcefulness and adaptation to the dynamic conditions of the present day.

In the analysis of the interdependence between employability and career capital, it is also worth taking into account the perceptual factor, understood as a way of perceiving by an individual one’s own career management possibilities in relation to the context of the contemporary labor market. An interesting discovery in this regard was made by B. Okay-Somerville and D. Scholarios (2015). The researchers proved that not only people who perceive their employability positively, but also those who evaluate it low, have a chance to achieve professional success. The main predictor of success in a career is the job search strategy used. It turns out that people with a low level of faith in their own employment opportunities more often use networking when looking for employment, which brings about the same beneficial effects as in the case of people who are proactive constructors of their career. According to the researchers, other important factors influencing the increase in the competitiveness of an individual on the labor market include: attitude to failure, emotional state, involvement in career management, and belief in the possessed skills.

There is a wide range of options that an individual may undertake to enhance and maintain his employability. Among them, the following procedures should be

indicated: continuous learning by gaining experience, using the competences in new contexts, creating social networks and industry connections, continuous setting of professional goals and creating a vision of one's own professional future, caring for the balance between the professional sphere and other areas of life (work–life balance), use of various forms of professional development (Clarke, 2013; Sutherland et al., 2015). The initiator of these undertakings may be both a person who starts his professional activity, participating in the labor market for some time, and an employer. According to the research team led by M. Sutherland, the main determinants of all career development efforts are: personal achievement orientation related to motivation and perseverance to act, as well as emotional intelligence and self-knowledge (Sutherland et al., 2015). It is worth noting that these properties relate to the internal locus of control aspect. This means that an individual, as a conscious constructor of his/her professional life, is obliged to participate in the process of accumulating his/her career capital.

IMPLICATIONS FOR EDUCATIONAL PRACTICE

A factor that significantly contributes to increasing employability is the development of transferable, also known as soft, transversal or transitional, competences (Dębowski & Stęchły, 2019, p. 92; Bohdziewicz, 2012, p. 294). They refer to the individual's skills that can be used in various workplaces and social situations. Due to the high degree of applicability in various life and professional contexts, they allow for flexible reaction in changing reality conditions, increase the chances of success in a career and guarantee permanent human development (Turek & Wojtczuk-Turek, 2010). The group of transferable competences includes: communication, cooperation, creativity, learning, problem solving, analyticity, consistency in undertaken activities, accuracy, and commitment (Turek & Wojtczuk-Turek, 2010). These skills are extremely important in the process of personal employability management (Świgoń, 2011). An inseparable element of creating educational conditions conducive to shaping an individual's ability to find and keep employment are measures aimed at including young people in social participation, creating situations conducive to independent decision-making and bearing consequences for them.

The Future of Jobs Report 2020 prepared by the World Economic Forum indicates that the most desirable competences on the labor market include: analytical thinking, active learning, complex problem-solving, which they relate to critical thinking skills. Developing young people's ability to think independently, analyti-

cally, and to solve problems, is one of the most important and at the same time the most difficult educational challenges. T. Kalbarczyk (2014) emphasizes that this task is not always fulfilled by a Polish school, and its implementation requires basing the teaching and learning process of students on the principles of openness, free discussion and posing open-ended questions, not having one correct answer variant. Educational activities aimed at preparing young people to enter the labor market should avoid encyclopedism and focus on improving their permanent learning skills and building “global awareness” of the individual (Kukla, 2017). A person analyzing the surrounding reality, able to see in it opportunities for their own development, making independent decisions – will have a predisposition to plan, monitor and manage their own career in conditions of permanent change.

A key issue in developing employability is seeing it as a learning process, not an educational “product”. It is worth bearing in mind that the essence of enhancing the employability of young people consists not only in shaping a set of specific skills, but also in providing them with various types of experiences as a result of which they can use them (Harvey, 2004). Due to the smooth nature of employability, an indispensable element influencing its development is the ability of reflective self-analysis and verification of one’s own situation in relation to contextual factors. Competencies should not be understood only as specialist knowledge and skills, but also as a process aimed at learning about the mechanisms of the labor market and the ability to use the resources available. As a consequence, it turns out that it is important to develop not so much the cognitive dimension of competences as the behavioral aspect related to their effective application in specific situations.

One of the instruments for increasing employability in Poland is the Polish Qualifications Framework, which is a reference system to the levels of the European Qualifications Framework. It consists of an 8-point scale covering the description of the scope of knowledge, skills and social competences acquired in vocational, general and higher education. The Integrated Qualifications System aims not only to raise the level of human capital, but also to gather and organize various qualifications in one statement.⁸ This solution contributes to the responsiveness of qualifications, that is, their adaptation to the current market needs through a flexible response to changes. In the process of determining the position and professional role of the subject, attention is paid to his qualifications and competences, which undoubtedly have a measurable commercial value on the labor market and at the same time contribute to strengthening the human potential. An educational activity supporting the process of efficient management of one’s own

8 <https://kwalifikacje.edu.pl/>

career by an individual is the creation of flexible education programs based on the principle of learning outcomes. Such a solution will make it easier to compare the achievements obtained in different educational institutions and will contribute to increasing the level of employability of potential graduates due to the possibility of greater freedom of teachers in the selection of teaching content, increasing the importance of the student's independent learning process, also as a result of experience (Wyrozębski, 2009).

Among the preventive educational measures aimed at supporting the employability of young people, one can also mention the dual system of vocational education, which involves combining the process of gaining practical experience and professional knowledge in the course of education. Significant benefits are also to be expected from various undertakings, initiatives and projects aimed at strengthening cooperation and relations between employers and the education system. The volatility of the modern labor market obliges an individual to constantly improve and be ready to deal with its dynamism. Therefore, in the learning process, there should be no shortage of designed situations requiring problem thinking, considering various solutions and course of events.

CONCLUSION

Career capital is a specific composition of skills, knowledge, beliefs, predispositions and qualifications of an individual, reflected in their behavior, decisions, adopted system of values and professional orientations, which consequently allow them to achieve a certain level of employability. The unpredictability of the modern labor market, the need for permanent and effective adaptation to socio-economic conditions, forces reflection on the idea of *lifelong employability* (Davies, Diemand-Yauman, & van Dam, 2019). The personal commitment of the individual and their personality properties related to activities aimed at constructing a professional biography, resilience and strategies for coping with the unpredictability and uncertainty of the present day, are of significant importance for their development, because "the lack of investment in career capital is the end not only of a career in the meaning of a specific professional work, but an employment career in general" (Bańka, 2016b, p. 76). The need to undertake efforts to constantly update one's own employment attractiveness corresponds to the category of "career portfolio", the essence of which lies in reflections, plans and investing in knowledge, skills and attitudes that are important for increasing the marketing value of the entity (Woodbury, Addams, & Neal, 2009, p. 8).

The shaping of career capital is influenced by various factors, internal and external to the individual. It is worth emphasizing, however, that an important role in the process of professional development is played by everyday life situations related to discovering social roles, building relationships with other people, carrying out specific tasks or constituting one's identity. This regularity shows the relationship between the professional activity of a human being and other areas of his participation, in relation to which it takes on a special meaning. The adopted optics is not without significance for contemporary career counseling, the essence of which is to support in "individual learning reflective (re)construction of biographies, supporting in learning the tolerance of fears and uncertainty" (Wojtasik, 2003, p. 349), which is an inseparable element of dynamic reality. Therefore, not without significance in the process of increasing the employability of young people is the development of career management skills, including those related to the creation of social networks and self-promotional competences, as well as building their awareness in the field of getting to know one's beliefs not only about one's resources, but also fears and contextual barriers. The identification of individual and external factors determining competitiveness in the labor market for the subject constitutes the basis for self-perceived employability and reflection on their professional position (Świgoń, 2014b).

Accumulation of career capital, related to its permanent renewal and undertaking investment measures aimed at its development, is undoubtedly related to the employability of an individual, the value of which depends both on their involvement in the course of their own professional biography, as well as on educational influences and changing conditions of the contemporary labor market. It is worth noting, however, that the liquidity of both of these categories indicates their specific qualitative relationship, the satisfaction with their development is largely determined by the conscious actions of the subject.

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