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THE DIRECTIONS OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE EDUCATIONAL INFRASTRUCTURE IN POLAND

1. Introduction

The situation of education in most modern states, with the exception of the wealthiest, is not perfect [Lewowicki 1997, 132–134]. As far as the Polish education is concerned, its poor condition is to a large extent the consequence of many years of underinvestment. The educational reforms introduced in recent years raised hopes for the increase in expenditure on education, the improvement of infrastructure, the expansion of the networks of educational institutions, better furnishings of such institutions, the improvement of working conditions and better salaries for teachers. In fact, all of these reforms more frequently brought progressing impoverishment of education rather than any improvement.

The reasons for these disadvantageous changes in the Polish education are not a secret. The condition of the Polish economy and finances are well known. Despite the relatively high rate of economic growth expressed in basic criteria (GNP, consumption, investments), there is no transposition of the achieved results on the achievement of essential social objectives. The proof of this is a very high level of unemployment, increasing social stratification, growing poverty, the necessity to emigrate in search of work, and the lack of any prospects for young people.

The lack of any coherent and consistent economic and social policy in Poland deepens the disbelief in the improvement of the Polish education which largely depends on various forms of the state's support. The latter is so very important because in the conditions of the increasing impoverishment of the Polish society any attempts to charge it with educational costs are not quite realistic. The dramatic situation and the standing of education problems associated with economy become even more serious because, to a large extent,

the state of education has a decisive influence on the success or failure of the economic and social transformations. The solution of national social problems requires a new strategic approach to education and science, which must be dealt with as highly profitable investments influencing the social and economic development, and civilization progress, and not as they used to be treated – as costs burdening the state budget and the national economy.

The educational reform introduced in and implemented since 1999, just like the earlier decentralization reform of educational management, in the general scale have not had any clear effects of considerably rationalizing educational decisions and their adjusting to actual needs [Szymański 2004, 61–63].

The very fact of handing over educational institutions to local governments was not connected with any significant flow of financial resources. It is true that the wealthiest communes were able to improve their schools' and teachers' working conditions, but the communes deprived of considerable income have been systematically falling into debts and looking for savings, by closing down small schools, limiting the employment of teachers or eliminating after-school activities. Every decision of this type changed the pupils' school situation and caused the growth of differences not only between towns' and villages' access to education, but between particular regions of the country as well. The unsatisfactory state of the Polish education makes it necessary for the state to introduce essential changes in its educational policy. The growing role of human capital in the economy and our rightful participation in European structures are sufficient reasons for education to become a priority in the decisions concerning the future economic development of Poland and Europe.

2. Strategies of educational infrastructure development in the documents on the strategic development of the Polish economy

Since 1998 many documents determining the directions of development and aims of education have been drawn up in Poland. The most important of them, "The Reform of the Educational System" of 1998, determined three main educational objectives [Banach 2006, 107]:

1. the increase in the level of the society's education through popularizing secondary and higher education,
2. the levelling of educational chances for people from various social groups and environments,
3. favouring quality improvement understood as the integral process of upbringing and education.

Although this document brought about significant changes in the Polish educational system, it was not a comprehensive and prospective document. It had

to be supplemented and updated constantly. In 1993, the Ministry of National Education and Sport published "The State's Strategy for Young People for the Years 2003–2012", and in 2004 – "The Strategy of Higher Education Development until the year 2010". The directions of changes in the Polish educational system were also included in the government's project entitled "The National Development Plan 2007–2013" of May 2005. In the priority document "Knowledge and Competence" the prospects for the Polish education development were presented, and it was assumed that in the years 2007–2013 the following will take place [The National Development Plan 2007–2013, 33]:

1. The increase of access to education through:
 - general IT education consisting in the use of IT technologies as an effective instrument supporting and facilitating the learning process,
 - building a system and culture of life-long learning through the execution of projects propitious for the teaching process in all forms and expressions of human activity,
 - the increase of access to higher education for young people from villages and from the poorest backgrounds,
 - the levelling of pupils' chances through early diagnostics of potentials and developmental disorders, the prevention of social pathologies and problematic behaviour among pupils,
 - the strengthening of the role of young learners' education.
2. The support of the educational system openness through:
 - the increase of the society's involvement in education – the involvement of grown-up people into the process of children's education,
 - the development of a wide educational and schooling offer enabling the fulfilment of individual skills and needs of pupils,
 - direct cooperation of institutions in the educational, schooling and labor market sectors in order to adjust the educational offer to the current and future personnel demand,
 - support for higher education schools and academic centers directed towards the increase of the Polish academic centers' importance in the process of economic growth,
 - professional improvement and education of personnel important from the perspective of economic growth and social integration,
 - the development and promotion of European cooperation in education.
3. The improvement of the quality of education through:
 - the formation and improvement of the so-called key competences, *i.e.* the basic skills and attitudes allowing for an active participation in the public, social and economic life,
 - the quality improvement of pedagogical staff, academic staff and personnel supporting and organizing the didactic process – creating con-

ditions for better development of professional and scientific careers, modernizing the educational and training system, as well as the teachers' working standards,

- effective education management, the formation of a quality evaluation culture – the development of quality evaluation and accreditation methods, the application of quality control to research and educational activities of universities and other educational institutions.

According to the guidelines of the National Development Plan, the achievement of the above-mentioned strategic objectives should considerably influence the quality of education, make the relations between Polish society's education and the demands of the labour market more flexible, bring Polish education closer to the European Union's standards, lower the disproportions in access to education among various social groups and increase the prestige of teachers and research workers. However, the achievement of these goals requires not only considerable changes in the educational system, means of management or in curricula, but to a large degree also in the material base of schools and universities, which depends on appropriate financial outlays. The present financial situation of the country does not enable any considerable increase in financial outlays on education in the nearest future, which calls into question the possibility of achieving the strategic objectives. *The State's Strategy for Young People* [<http://www.men.gov.pl/oswiata/strategia.php>.] refers to the main principles of the state's policy with regard to young people in the years 2003–2012. The inspiration to commence works on "The State's Strategy for Young People" was the consultation of the European Commission's White Book – New Impulses for Young People conducted by the Ministry of National Education and Sport. The strategy is based on five key issues: 1) young people's education, 2) employment, 3) young people's participation in the public life, 4) free time, culture, sport, tourism, 5) health and illness prevention. The implementation of the above-mentioned issues has been presented in six basic strategic objectives:

1. the creation of opportunities for young people's self-development,
2. the creation of opportunities for young people's own activities,
3. the prevention of young people's marginalization,
4. the development of international cooperation among young people,
5. the building of the youth information system,
6. the education and professional training of grown-up people working with young people.

These objectives elaborated in the form of operational goals and executive tasks are presented in Table 1.

The *Strategy* implementation should allow young people to have a satisfactory professional, social and personal life. It should also provide conditions for every young person to become self-reliant and able to overcome life difficulties. The *Strategy* aim is elimination of social alienation, an increase in health

awareness and prevention of social marginalization. The achievement of the strategic objectives should lead to an increase in young people's participation in the economic, cultural and social life. It was assumed that the *Strategy* refers to the social group of people aged 15–24, i.e. young people learning in secondary and higher education schools.

Taking into consideration the role played by higher education schools in the national economy (the education of highly qualified personnel), the Ministry of National Education and Sport prepared an additional Strategy of this level development.

The Strategy of Higher Education Development until the Year 2010 [<http://www.menis.gov.pl/szk-wyz>] is based on two basic elements: the program (mission, notions, tasks) and the resources (personnel, finances), and it comprises the achievement of seven operational objectives:

1. The maintenance and development of the universality and availability of higher education. An undoubted success in the development of higher education in Poland is a nearly fourfold increase of the number of students in 2004 in comparison with that of 1990.

This denotes a transition from elite to universal higher education. The Strategy of Higher Education Development assumes that by the year 2010 the proportion of the number of students to the number of people at the age of higher education school will have been five times higher than that of 1990. In the academic year 2004/2005 the gross index of scholarization was about 50%. It is assumed that in the year 2010 this index will rise to the level of about 65%.

2. The improvement of the quality and effectiveness of the higher education system. The popularization of higher education in Poland was not accompanied with the care for the proper quality of education correlated with the requirements of the labor market and the possibility of exporting educational services to the European Union's market. The Strategy assumes the introduction of significant changes in the teaching system, which can have a decisive influence on the quality of education. These changes, among other things, should refer to:

- the adjustment of the professional certification system to the requirements of the European Union and world standards,
- the extension of the individual studies system,
- the activation of didactic consulting,
- the popularization of syllabuses and didactic offers,
- the standardization of internal examinations and the introduction of external examinations,
- the objectification of students as rightful educational partners,
- the formation of the Central Examinational Commission of Higher Education which would be a supplement to the National Accreditation Commis-

Table 1. The objectives and executive tasks in the development of the Polish education in the

Strategic and operational objectives	Investment tasks
<p>1. Creation of opportunities for young people's self-development:</p> <p>a) giving the chance of universal access to education to all interested people</p> <p>b) levelling of educational opportunities for young people in their access to education</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - increase of the scholarization index - popularization of access to foreign languages learning - popularization of IT education <p>c) development of connections between education and the labor market needs</p> <p>d) preparation of young people's unemployment prevention programs and the provision of conditions facilitating self-reliance</p> <p>2. Creating opportunities for the development of young people's activity</p> <p>a) growth of youth organizations' role,</p> <p>b) support of young people's participation in the public and social life,</p> <p>c) development of international exchange and young people's cooperation programs</p> <p>d) support of tourism and the popularization of active recreation, and organization of free time</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - organization of an effective and safe transportation of pupils to schools (it refers mainly to children from villages) - expenditure on transportation means - architectural preparation of school buildings for the education of disabled people - expenditure on buildings - creation of a material educational base, especially at the secondary and higher education level - expenditure on buildings - expenditure on specialist language laboratories - provision of schools at all levels with computer laboratories with access to the Internet - opening of centres of multimedia and Internet information in libraries - provision of schools at all levels with broadband access to the Internet, including the financial means for its utilization in the amount covering the needs resulting from the teaching process and after-school classes - building of the base of educational resources: thematic educational portals, electronic virtual libraries, servers with educational materials enabling remote teaching - expenditure on the formation and equipment of a network of professional career centres (career bureaus), especially at the higher education level - the popularization of credit systems for learners and the improvement of the material help forms for young people - expenditure on the development of youth organizations (ZHP, LOK, OHP and the like) and pupils' and students' self-government - expenditure on preferential financing and subsidizing of the international exchange of young people - expenditure on the national and international tourism of young people - expenditure on the development and quality improvement of young people's tourist base

years 2003–2012

Strategic and operational objectives	Investment tasks
<p>3. Prevention of the young generation's marginalization</p> <p>a) restructuring of after-class and extra-school activities</p> <p>b) promotion of a healthy style of life</p> <p>c) support of young people's cultural development</p> <p>d) creation of conditions facilitating the return of young people who have broken the law to life in society</p>	<p>– expenditure on the development of the empty school base and the resources of teaching staff with orientation to the young people's free time</p> <p>– the restoration of closed down school surgeries and dentist's offices</p> <p>– the increase of expenditure on young people's participation in the cultural life of the region and the country (the theatre, the cinema, etc.)</p> <p>– expenditure on after-class activities developing young people's talents and creativity</p> <p>expenditure on the development of the social rehabilitation base for young people</p>
<p>4. Development of international cooperation of young people</p> <p>a) popularization of foreign languages learning,</p> <p>b) popularization of tolerance principles and respect for differences,</p> <p>c) popularization of knowledge about other cultures,</p> <p>d) popularization of European programs</p>	<p>– expenditure on educational programs</p>
<p>5. Building of young people's information system</p> <p>a) creation of a strong research centre and the solution of young people's problems</p> <p>b) building of a national data base on:</p> <p>– the Polish education system,</p> <p>– the cultural infrastructure for young people</p>	<p>– expenditure on the building or adaptation of rooms serving as research centers</p> <p>– expenditure on computer programs, Internet networks</p>
<p>6. Education and professional training of grown-up people working with young people including changes in the educational and professional training system for teachers</p>	<p>– expenditure on the development of methodological centres for teachers</p> <p>– expenditure on the financing of courses and training in order not to charge teachers with the costs of training</p>

Source: author's own analysis on the basis of the *State's Strategy for Young People for the Years 2003–2012*. The Ministry of National Education and Sport, Warsaw 2002

sion and which would aim at organizing knowledge and competence tests in specific subjects and fields of study for extramural students (including distant studies).

3. Education for work – work after education. Economy based on knowledge and IT technologies demands the development of new skills in all professions, both traditional and new ones, or those which are yet to be created. Education has to teach for posterity, which means that it has to intensify analytical skills, develop innovative talents and resourcefulness.

4. Learning, research and personnel development. The increasing problem of higher education is the insufficient number of academic teachers with the highest qualifications. Without the development of the research personnel, the improvement of education quality is impossible. Hence, the *Strategy* assumes the quantitative and qualitative development of academic teachers through:

- the development of postgraduate studies,
- faster passing of opinions on academic promotion applications,
- the strengthening of the international exchange system for academic teachers,
- the introduction of faster ways of academic promotion for talented doctoral students, including the possible recognition of the position of an associate professor.

5. The development of the university infrastructure and access to the Internet. Without the development of the higher education infrastructure neither quantitative nor qualitative changes will be possible. The introduction of computers, telecommunication networks and multimedia will decisively modernize the forms and methods of education, and what is most important, it will bring the immediate user closer to the scientific resources of virtual laboratories.

6. Life education and e-education. The initiative of life education is based on education at every age and at all levels, both in schools and in extra-school forms. This strategy's objective is, among other things, to guarantee universal access to education, to increase the level of investment in human resources, to assure easy access to information, to develop effective teaching and learning methods.

7. Harmonization within the framework of the European Area of Higher Education. European integration in the field of higher education consists in the harmonization of educational systems in the so-called Bologna process. Its main objectives are: to allow the mobility of students and research personnel, the adjustment of the educational system to the labour market needs, and especially the improvement of students' employment chances, the increase of attractiveness and the improvement of competitiveness of the higher education system in Europe.

Work on the objectives presented in the "Strategy of Higher Education Development" tends towards:

- the strengthening of the principle of the state's subsidiary policy towards higher education schools,
- the strengthening of the ability to supervise and control educational processes,
- the fulfilment of obligations to the European Union in the field of law adjustment, regulations issuing, information exchange,
- the adoption of organizational solutions in accordance with the EU standards and the Bologna Process.

In August 2005, the Ministry of National Education and Sport published a new strategy of the development of the Polish education which is supposed to be the implementation of the Lisbon Strategy (1999), the program entitled Education and Training 2010 and the Strategic Guidelines of the European Community concerning the policy of cohesion in the years 2007–2013 [Banach 2006, 108]. The Strategy assumes: greater universality of education, transformations in demography and social mobility, the fulfilment of increasing educational needs, the elimination of inequality in social and living conditions, the introduction of new requirements in the field of knowledge and skills, and greater correlation with the European education system. The Strategy is expected to be a basis for the comprehensive and prospective *Strategy of Education Development in the Years 2020–2025*, which is now being prepared.

The documents referring to the prospects of the Polish education development require constant verification and integration with other elaborations of the government and the European Union's bodies, as well as with the prognosis for Poland's development prepared by the Prognoses Committee "Poland 2000 Plus" at the Presidium of the Polish Academy of Sciences. This results from the fact that all changes in the sphere of education have to be precisely correlated with changes in other spheres of the economy. Education has a considerable influence on these transformations and without its participation it is impossible to build an economy based on knowledge.

3. Investment premises for the educational infrastructure development

The possibility of achieving the objectives and performing prospective educational tasks presented in the above-mentioned documents depends not only on legal adjustments, more effective organization, flexibility of teaching programs or students' and research personnel's mobility, but also – to a large extent – on the creation of appropriate learning and working conditions for students and teachers. These conditions depend largely on the appropriate infrastructure,

whose needs were limited in the discussed Strategies only to the needs connected with computerization, multimedia networks' development or the use of audio-visual means in the didactic process. These are undoubtedly significant needs, but for many educational establishments they are not a priority. More important priorities are the needs connected with the modernization of old buildings which have not been redecorated for many years, with the acquisition of new classes, laboratories, or with the provision of appropriate social conditions for learners. This problem does not have any reflection in the Strategies and that is why there is no optimism as far as the solution of the increasing problems in this field is concerned.

All documents referring to the prospects for educational development pay special attention to the necessity of undertaking tasks aiming at increasing the quality of education. These activities will not bring the expected results, however, if considerable transformations in the material base of the educational infrastructure are not brought about. It has the greatest influence on the quality of education by creating appropriate conditions for learning, and that is why its needs should become priority tasks.

The accomplishment of transformations in the material base of the educational infrastructure will demand a considerable increase in investments. Keeping the amount of expenditure at the present level may be insufficient in order to achieve the prospective assumptions of educational development. According to the author of the paper, there are many premises which speak for the necessity of increasing investments, for example:

Demographic forecast. The nearest years will be characterized by a falling tendency of the number of learners at particular levels of education. However, the decreasing number of people willing to learn cannot be the basis for conclusions that there is no need to introduce significant changes in the quantity and quality of educational establishments. Irrespective of the number of learners, the superior objective of education should be the provision of such favourable learning conditions for learners that would improve the quality of education. Hence, it is not the number of students but the deficiencies in the material base of the educational infrastructure that should be the basis for the increase in investments. The acceptance of the rule that "money follows the student" calls into question the improvement of the quality of educational establishments. The smaller number of students may cause a considerable decrease in investments instead of their growth. The rule seems to be erroneous even more if it is remembered that the increase of education quality will require access to the latest didactic aids, specialist laboratories or appropriate back-up educational and social facilities. This will bring about the necessity to increase investments in modern machines, technical devices and tools, *i.e.* these capital assets which directly influence the quality of the educational process.

The qualitative state of the existing material base of the educational infrastructure. The analysis of the existing state of the material base of the educational infrastructure results in the statement that it is characterized by a very low quality, and the deficiencies in it cannot encourage the increase in education quality.

The accomplishment of significant transformations in the material base of the educational infrastructure should become the priority objective of the principles of the strategic education development regarding the most important needs in this field. According to the author, these are mainly the following:

a) an increase in the number of classrooms, specialist laboratories (language, IT laboratories), back-up facilities and the basic sanitation, which will considerably improve the learning conditions for pupils and students and the working conditions for teachers. It should be noticed here that the majority of buildings in which schools function do not satisfy the needs of these schools. There is either a complete lack of or insufficient equipment necessary for the fulfilment of educational functions in them. Many of the buildings in which educational establishments are located require capital repairs so that they could be adjusted to the educational needs (sewerage systems, heating systems),

b) the equipment of schools with technical tools, modern multimedia and techniques essential in the building of IT society,

c) the considerable development of the back-up facilities (dormitories, canteens, places for free time activities, gyms, swimming pools, school recreation rooms), which will not only improve the quality of education but which can also influence the lowering of costs incurred by learners,

d) the restoration of school surgeries, which can have a significant influence on the improvement of pupils' health. The state of Polish youth's health does not differ very much from the European average, but in the well-developed European countries prophylaxis is propagated at the lowest levels of education through frequent contacts of pupils with school doctors or nurses,

e) the reactivation of students' culture centres, which can not only influence students' cultural development, but also be an integration place for students at a particular university and between universities,

f) giving more prestige to the teaching profession through the increase of salaries, which may cause the growth of the number of people willing to do research at higher education schools and to become teachers at the lower levels of education,

g) extending the educational offer with after-class activities and enabling pupils who live far away from their schools to participate in them by increasing the number of school buses (it refers mainly to pupils in villages).

The restructuring of the educational system. The necessity of a thorough restructuring of the Polish educational system resulted, among other

things, from the weak correlation between society's level of education and the changing needs of the labour market. The education reform of 1998, which changed the structure of the entire educational system, was supposed to be based on the principle of education universality, and alternative, innovative and broad-profile teaching. The equalizer of educational chances was to be the new level of education created by the educational reform – the junior secondary school. According to the reform's assumptions, these schools were to be situated in separate buildings, especially prepared for education at this level. However, because of huge room deficiencies they were placed in primary school buildings, which resulted not only in extreme overcrowding, but also in their disadvantageous influence on younger children's educational process. In the future the educational base separating these two levels should be extended so that teaching conditions can be adjusted to learners' age.

The new educational system puts general education in the foreground; by 2010 there should be about 80% of secondary schools graduates in high schools ending with the "matura" examination. The achievement of this objective will require much more investment, which should improve the material base of this education level both quantitatively and qualitatively. High school graduates holding their graduation diplomas will be able to continue their education at a higher level without any obstacles. This means that also this level of education has to be prepared to provide learners with appropriate learning conditions, which will undoubtedly depend on financial means remaining at higher education schools' disposal.

The broad-profile educational system will not comprise all junior secondary schools' graduates, however. Some of them will continue their education in vocational schools, which in order to train qualified workers will have to introduce considerable changes in educational methods exacted by the altering needs of both the internal and the external labour market. These changes refer mainly to the necessity of practical education development, both intra-school and extra-school (a come back to vocational training in production plants). Intra-school education should be based on very well equipped workrooms, laboratories and school workshops, so that graduates will be not only theoretically, but also practically well prepared to work in their trades.

The acceptance of the Polish educational system transformation as a premise necessitating the increase of investment on education was dictated by the fact that, according to the author, it is not possible to introduce such significant changes in Polish schools without financial consequences. Concentrating only on the change of organizational structures, the indication of educational objectives or the determination of the principles of schools' functioning will not bring the expected results in the future (the increase of the educational level), unless many more financial means are allocated to the Polish education. As it has been pointed out above, they are essential in order to meet the expecta-

tions of both learners and the entire economy at every level of education in the future.

The directions of changes in Polish schools resulting from integration tasks. Poland's accession to the European Union brought about the necessity of transformation in the Polish educational system. Economic and political integration set the Polish school the task of creating a modern school orientated toward Europe. In order to carry out this task significant changes have to be introduced not only in the teaching programs or school organization, but also in the elimination of differences between the level and possibilities of educational development in the European countries and in Poland. As it has been pointed out before, educational expenditure in well-developed countries is not regarded in the category of consumption but investment expenditure, resulting in the acquisition of highly qualified personnel. Such an approach to education, having a reflection in investments in its development, should become one of the main strategic objectives of the Polish education development.

The Polish school can eliminate the differences in the nearest future, but it will require much more financial expenditure, which should become a priority in the state's budget and be regarded as investment expenditure, just as it is in the other EU countries.

4. Financing of education in the assumptions for the strategic development of the Polish education

The multi-plane and long-term process of the Polish educational system reform requires not only preparation of documents determining new tasks and strategic educational objectives, but also elaboration of programs of expenditure increase and rationalization of the educational system's organization for many years.

The necessity of preparing such programs can be proved not only by the premises pointed out by the author above, but also by the tasks presented in the documents of strategic educational development. These documents indicate the sources of financing educational establishments, but there is no information proving that it will become a priority as far as the investments on education are concerned.

In *The State's Strategy for Young People* it is assumed that the main sources of financing educational undertakings will be the following: [<http://www.gov.pl/oswiata/strategia.php>]:

- the state's budget,
- local governments' means,
- special means from extra charges imposed on the state's monopoly games and from alcoholic beverages advertisements allocated to the performance of tasks in the field of sport and culture,

– funds raised within the general health insurance according to the principles specified in the Act of 23 January, 2003 on the general insurance in the National Health Fund (*Journal of Laws*, No. 45, item 391 as amended), assigned for young people's health care,

– means from the European Union's Structural Funds, such as the European Social Fund supporting financially the Sector Operational Program of the Development of Human Resources and the Integrated Operational Program of Regional Development,

– the European Orientation and Agricultural Guarantee Fund, and the means from the state's budget included in the Development Plan of Rural Regions and the Sector Operational Program "Restructuring and modernization of the food sector and the development of rural regions",

– schools' own means obtained as a result of their didactic and educational activity.

As far as higher education is concerned, the standard of financing this level of education by the state's budget should reach 1.2% of the GNP in the nearest future. Realistic evaluation indicates, however, that no increase of investments from the budget above the level of 0.88% of the GNP should be expected. Hence, higher education schools can obtain means for the performance of the assumed strategic tasks from other sources, among which there are the following:

- means from the European Union,
- individual people's expenditure (fund-raising, foundations' subsidies),
- the introduction of "iron capital" (endowment),
- the development of paid postgraduate training for companies and individual people,
- means obtained from local and regional governments.

The appearance of additional sources of education financing cannot in any way release the state from its responsibility for society's education level. The main source of education's financing remains the state's budget and it should secure a proper amount of financial resources for the achievement of the assumed objectives.

According to Cz. Banach, the achievement of the strategic objectives of Polish education's development will not be possible if less than 6% of the GNP, and in the years 2015–2020 about 8% of the GNP, from both budget and extra-budget sources, is spent on education [Banach 2006, 207]. Poland's aspiration to create an economy based on knowledge has to enforce greater investments in the human capital, and thus also in these spheres of economy which the capital depends on most of all. Such a sphere is undoubtedly education, so its needs should be satisfied as a priority, since only an effective and well functioning educational system will contribute to the provision of individuals with competences increasing their competitiveness in the labour market and preparedness for active participation in the social and economic life.

5. Conclusions

If the reform activities in education are to be effective and lead to satisfactory results, they all must be supported with a reserve pool of precisely specified objectives the achievement of which creates chances of development prospects in the future. These objectives are generally the following: the elimination of the considerable underinvestment of education, the connection of the educational system with institutions of parallel education, the formation of a coherent structural and programmatic-methodological conception, the growth of the network of educational establishments and institutions, and the adjustment of education to the market economy [Ćwikliński 2005, 473]. The necessity of further reform activities in education is also enforced by our rightful membership in the European Union. This membership requires the formation of education which will allow the graduates of Polish schools to look for work and to compete for places at higher education schools with their peers from other countries of the United Europe. Hence, there is the need to organize the Polish educational system in such a way that it will be characterized by its national specificity on the one hand, and it will give the Polish young people a chance to find their place in Europe on the other hand [Ćwikliński 2005, 186–187].

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