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## **Funkcjonowanie placówek edukacyjnych w kontekście niwelowania dysproporcji rozwojowych<sup>1</sup>**

### **Streszczenie**

W Polsce powiększa się przepaść między regionami, na niekorzyść najbiedniejszych, czego wynikiem jest także narastanie nierówności dochodowych w społeczeństwie. Co więcej, istniejące nierówności dochodowe mogą również ograniczyć perspektywy dochodów przyszłych pokoleń.

W artykule omówiono style zarządzania placówką edukacyjną w kontekście możliwości rozwijania umiejętności kluczowych pożądaných na współczesnym rynku pracy i dla przyszłości, które przyczynić się mogą do niwelowania dysproporcji rozwojowych.

Hipoteza badawcza: zmiana sposobu zarządzania placówką edukacyjną może stanowić skuteczne narzędzie rozwijania umiejętności kluczowych pożądaných na współczesnym rynku pracy i dla przyszłości.

Metody: obejmują zarówno dane pierwotne, jak i wtórne, w tym: studia literaturowe dotyczące opracowań zwartych, a także czasopism i innych publikacji, analizy statystyczne, wnioskowanie, synteza dla całościowego opracowania.

Problem rozwijania u dzieci i młodzieży pożądaných przez pracodawców umiejętności jest trudnym zagadnieniem, które wymaga szerokiej gamy rozwiązań. Nie mniej w świecie rosnących nierówności dochodowych, koncentracja na kapitale własnym edukacji, może stanowić skuteczne podejście do rozwiązania tego problemu w dłuższym horyzoncie czasowym.

**Słowa kluczowe:** polityka edukacyjna, dysproporcje rozwojowe

## **Education as a tool for eliminating development disparities**

### **Abstract**

There is a growing gap among the regions in Poland to the disadvantage of the poorest, leading to the growth of earning income inequalities in the society. Furthermore, the existing income inequalities can also limit the income prospects for future generations.

In the article, the author attempts to create a model for management of an educational institution that responds to contemporary development challenges.

Research hypothesis: the change in management of an educational institution is an effective tool to minimize development disparities.

Methods: include both primary and secondary data and literature studies on compact studies, as well as journals and other publications, statistical analysis, inference, synthesis of the overall study.

The implications for education policy are clear. An education policy focused on its own capital can be a very effective tool for increasing earnings mobility between generations and reducing income inequality in time and therefore can be as an effective tool for growth. The problem of eliminating development disparities and income inequality is a complex issue that requires the application of a wide range of solutions. Nonetheless, in the world of growing

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<sup>1</sup> Rozumiane jako dysproporcje w rozwoju społeczno-gospodarczym regionów, które decydują o poziomie życia zamieszkujących je osób.

inequalities, the concentration on own educational capital can prove an effective approach to solve this problem in the long term.

**Keywords:** disparities, education policy

**JEL CODE:** I24, I25

### **Introduction**

The leveling development disparities and inequality is a difficult issue that requires a wide range of solutions. Nevertheless, in the world of growing inequalities, focus on the equity of education can be an effective approach to resolving this problem in the long-term horizon.

On the basis of research on the literature, as well as own research, the following hypothesis was verified in this article: changing the way of managing an educational institution can be an effective tool for developing key skills desired in the modern labor market and for the future.

The article uses research methods that cover both primary and secondary data, including: literature research on compact studies, as well as journals and other publications, statistical analysis, inference, synthesis for the overall study.

High quality of education cannot be understood only as a high indicator of knowledge transfer, but above all development of key skills for the successful participation in the contemporary labor market and for the future. Educational goals based solely on the transfer of knowledge and achieving the highest rates in this respect are insufficient in the context of economic development.

In the 21<sup>st</sup>-century economy, knowledge is the most valuable resource that determines the development of the economy as a whole (Hryniewicz 2000, Domański 2001). Therefore, in the modern economy there is a great demand for highly qualified employees, as confirmed by the EU 2020 economic strategy. Skilled workers and scientists are the most sought after on the labor market and they are also best paid.

Less developed regions normally tend to have low capabilities in taking up production at a high technological level and therefore compete mainly with price, finding themselves under a strong competitive threat posed by potentially cheaper producers and manufacturers. It is worth emphasizing that price competition can only be won by those who are happy with low salaries, i.e. the poor. As a consequence of these processes, the segmentation of territorial systems is consolidated: the high segment generates innovations that allow to obtain high wages and profits as well as maintain a stable competitive advantage; technologically outdated products are produced in the low segment, with the use of small capital resources and a low-paid, poorly qualified workforce. This segment aims at achieving a comparative advantage, consisting in offering a product cheaper than the competition<sup>2</sup>.

The economies of highly developed countries are based on the growing resources of well-educated people with creative and innovative skills, which is a necessary condition for technical, economic and social progress. For this reason, foreign direct investments today are located in centers of highly skilled and well-educated workforce, and the high cost of the work performed (i.e. high wages) is not a barrier.

### **Managing an educational institution**

The current system of the functioning of educational institutions in Poland reinforces the idea of education understood only as the transfer of knowledge, thus achieving high results in

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<sup>2</sup> These differences between these two approaches to market advantage were noted by Michael Porter (see e.g. Porter 2001).

knowledge tests in specific fields. There would be nothing wrong with that, were it not for the fact that such goals lead to inefficient operation of educational institutions as a whole and shift the priorities in favor of results. For the majority of educational institutions, this system can be illustrated as follows:

- Local governments, mostly managing educational institutions, focus on maintaining jobs for teachers, maintaining facilities and achieving good financial results.
- School principals are accounted for by the local government in terms of finance and employment, and for the implementation of curricula by the regional education authority
- Teachers, who want to meet the expectations of the local government, the regional education authority, the principal, parents and children, find a simple solution that a good test result will satisfy everyone - but will it really?

A large part of the resources in this management chain is absorbed by the attempt to meet the expectations of supervisors and the priority of test results, which leads to the informal shifting of goals, where the high quality of student's education and development ceases to be the objective, in favor of the mean result of the entire institution against other institutions in the region or country.

While every business model is based on profits, the obtaining of which can be either less or more costly, long-lasting or risky, the profit in the sphere of education is equipping the student with knowledge, social skills, emotional development and consequently attitudes that will help them succeed future economically and civically in the future.

The focus of educational institutions on the results of tests proves disadvantageous to the student, and thus the community, and thus the entire economy in the broader perspective.

The starting point for planning and pursuing the objectives of an educational institution is the identification of financial possibilities for a given school year. Only the knowledge of the budget determines planning and implementation of tasks. The basic task of an educational institution is to "maintain" and "survive", so, obviously, most of the tasks are directed at meeting the expectations of superiors - achieving high scores, maintaining employment and implementing curricula. The results obtained by students become a way to achieve the goals of teachers, principals and local governments. A management model like this leads to tensions and is doomed to fail because it will not be the educational institutions that are going to propel the economy in the coming years, but their graduates. These, unfortunately are often frustrated, unmotivated to act, unable to work in teams, presenting a demanding attitude towards the world and equipped with "dry knowledge" they often do not properly comprehend (Schulte-Markwort 2015). It is worth noting that the current expectations of employers towards school graduates relate primarily to the development of social and communication competence, such as foreign language skills. "General knowledge" occupies as low as the 26<sup>th</sup> place among the 33 skills and qualifications desired by employers, with "industry knowledge" ranked 29<sup>th</sup> and "diplomas and certificates" ranked 32<sup>nd</sup>. It is clear, based on the cited study results, that the investment such as education, and what the education system focuses on, is not a value appreciated by employers, thus it often becomes useless and the time devoted to it is considered wasted (Budnikowski, Dabrowski, Gašior, Macioł 2015).

The most expected qualifications are: effective communication, openness to learning and constant development, commitment, team work skills, ability to identify and justify priorities, responsibility, ability to organize work and effective time management, flexibility and adaptability (Budnikowski, Dabrowski, Gašior, Macioł 2015). Employers are currently inclined to work with people in possession of the above skills. At this moment, there is no obligatory program for students in Poland which would comprehensively - and in a balanced way - develop a set of cognitive, social and emotional skills so that the students can succeed in modern life. This set of skills was also widely discussed at the OECD conference on March 15, 2015 in Paris. The "Skills for Social Progress: The Power of Social and Emotional Skills" Report

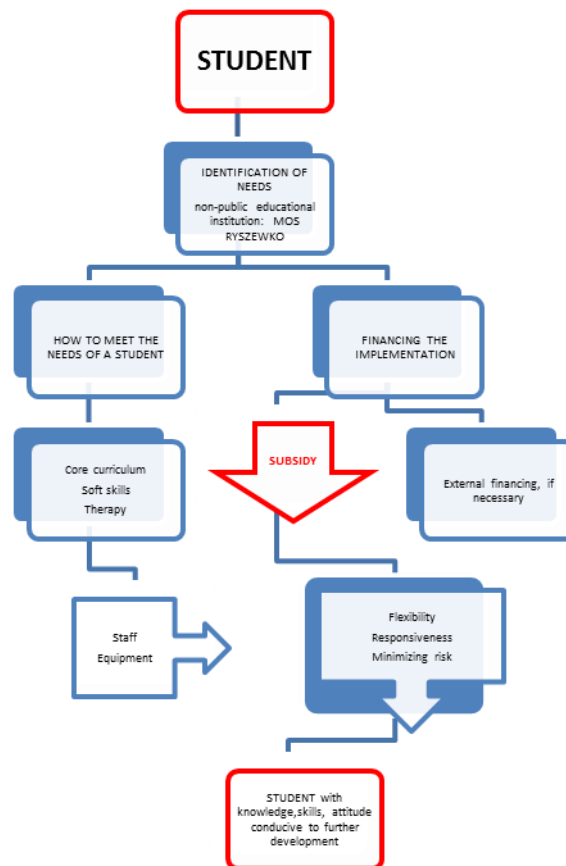
(OECD 2015) presents evidence of the impact of social and emotional skills in terms of education, labor market and social impact, describes educational practices that help support these skills and also provides a national overview of policies and programs that relate to improving social and emotional skills.

### How to improve the current education system

In order for the education system to respond to the occurring changes, develop the sought-after skills and qualifications, a change at management level is required. The starting point should in that respect be a reliable identification of the student's needs in terms of multi-faceted development both in terms of knowledge and skills, and thus changes in attitude and a set of social, communication, cognitive and emotional skills. Especially important is the recognition of the student's real needs, without setting a budget limit resulting from an increase in the potential demand for staff, equipment, etc. Identifying the student's needs is the overarching and basic guideline for planning and implementing further financial and educational measures.

In the area of financing educational institutions, subsidies from the state budget are the basic contribution to the budget of each such institution, but the development of the possibility of flexible and quick expenditure management enables the implementation of educational tasks. If necessary, additional external financing opportunities are sought in the form of projects, grants, subsidies from non-public institutions and non-governmental organizations.

**Figure 1. Proposed model for educational management**



Source: own study.

Figure 1 shows that at the level of the identification of student needs, the institution focuses on its multi-aspect development, not only in relation to knowledge, but mostly skills - team cooperation, communication, motivation, creative search for solutions, trust, seeking infor-

mation and its effective use, conflict resolution. The student is to be prepared by the institution for success in the modern world and to be an active member of a developing society. The presented way of managing an educational institution contributes to the increased effectiveness of the potential of students, employees as well as public finances.

### **Conclusions and recommendations**

The characteristic feature of today's strong economies is their competition driven by high quality. However, the growing economic inequalities make it difficult and restrict the ability of society to provide products and services with high added value, which ultimately determine competition in the global market. Economic problems related to unequal growth are exacerbated by social problems such as crime, drug addiction, dependence on government assistance and family breakdown. One way avoid these problems and increase the competitiveness of a knowledge-based economy is to equip today's and tomorrow's citizens with the skills and knowledge that determine economic and civic success in the economy. Unfortunately, the financing of education, and in particular the way of managing public educational institutions, lags behind and does not guarantee ever higher skills of students who, in themselves, constitute a kind of economic asset - human capital. The experience of many countries shows that increased investments in health, skills and knowledge ensure increased competitiveness of the economy through the increase in labor productivity. Education and decent wages increase employee productivity and also reduce social problems.

Improving the quality of education and learning offered above all requires changing the way the school is managed. This change should be based on the resetting of goals and focusing on student capital development. It is also necessary to reduce the size of classes, increase the flexibility of internal school finance management, enable rapid implementation of necessary activities, provide greater access to technologies for students at risk, and finally provide support for teacher education.

The determinant of a modern educational institution cannot be only the level of equipment with modern technologies, but a change in the way of transferring knowledge and development of cognitive, social and emotional skills of the students. Flexible movement along the modern changing labor marker, but also efficient functioning in a dynamically developing world, all call for educational institutions to prepare students for this changeability and dynamics. The forty-five minutes of classes should not only focus solely on passing the knowledge on a given topic, but also to inspire, motivate and support the student. Being professionals, teachers have the necessary skills and knowledge on how to do it and in many cases they could work more effectively and more efficiently, but they are often prevented by a management system that requires from them completely different attitudes and behaviors, and above emphasizes results instead of students.

Strong economies are competing with high value, not low costs. A country or region that offers a qualified workforce, modern infrastructure and a high quality of life cannot be considered an environment that is not conducive to entrepreneurship, even in spite of high taxes,. The increase in income inequality and increasing economic diversification constitute a barrier to the production of high added value products and services necessary to compete in the global market. Low wages translated not only into a low cost for the employer, but also less demand. Economic problems are exacerbated by social problems (crime, drug addiction, dependence on government assistance, family breakdown). Instead of spending public money towards productive investment, state institutions spend it on crime reduction, aid programs, etc. Prevention is almost always cheaper than treatment. If education is not invested in and managed wisely today, then it can certainly be said that the economy will incur undesirable social costs in the future as a result.

The solution to this problem in a knowledge-based economy is to equip current and future generations with the skills and attitudes of economic and civic success. There is a common

agreement that money wisely spent on education benefits not only employees, but also communities and businesses. The level of education raises income and increases productivity, while mistakes in education raise social costs.

Wise investing in education generates real, tangible results for employees, enterprises and society. For a company, not having properly educated staff means limited opportunities to compete, especially in foreign markets. If citizens do not have the necessary skills to succeed in the modern economy, they will always feel threatened by economic change.

Today, children and adolescents require a balanced set of cognitive, social and emotional skills in order to succeed in modern life. Their ability to achieve goals, collaborate effectively with others and manage emotions will be necessary to meet the challenges of the 21st century.

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