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Developing business competencies in lower secondary school in Poland

Aims and objectives

- to show the results of research how contemporary system of prevocational education in Poland creates favourable conditions for developing business competences
- analysis of official (national) core curriculum of general education and 2 school curricula
- interviews with teachers and social partners
- **curricula refers to the lower secondary school (gymnasium), in which the teaching lasts for 3 years**

Coding criteria of economic knowledge

| Criteria of economic knowledge | Code |
|---|-------------|
| Basic principles of economics | E1 |
| The market forces of supply and demand | E2 |
| Trade and globalization | E3 |
| Actors in the market | E4 |
| The monetary system | E5 |
| Government policies and its influences | E6 |
| Market forms | E7 |
| Firms in the market | E8 |
| Income | E9 |
| Indicators of economy | E10 |
| Labour market | E11 |

Coding criteria of business knowledge

| Criteria of business knowledge | Code |
|--|-------------|
| Business and its external environment | B1 |
| Corporate strategy and planning | B2 |
| Organizing | B3 |
| Directing | B4 |
| Controlling | B5 |
| Marketing and sales management | B6 |
| Production and operation management | B7 |
| Human resource management | B8 |
| Administrative management | B9 |
| Black economy and corruption | B10 (PL) |

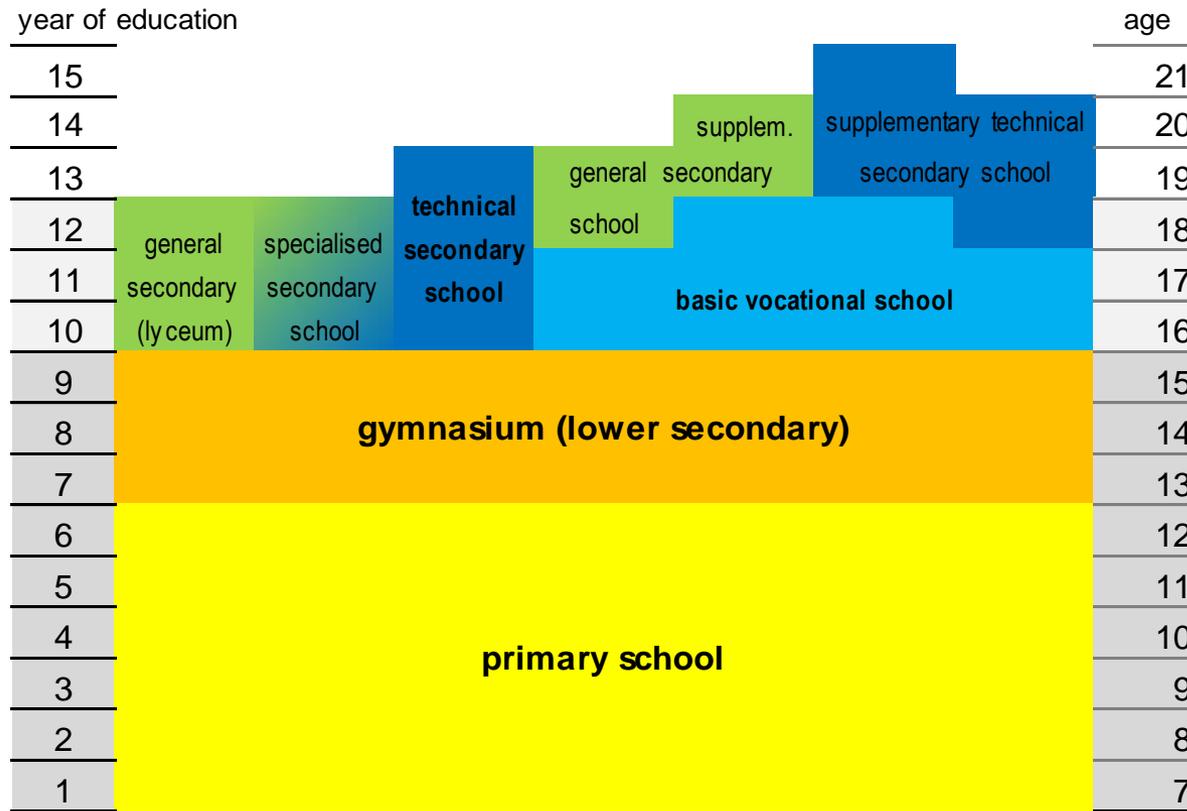
Coding social competencies/ interself-competencies

| Criteria of social competencies | Code |
|--|-------------|
| Communication ability | SO1 |
| Conflict ability | SO2 |
| Ability to give and receive criticism | SO3 |
| Team ability | SO4 |
| Empathy | SO5 |

Coding self-competencies with the emphasis on entrepreneurial competence/entrepreneurship

| Criteria for self-competence with the emphasis on entrepreneurial competence/entrepreneurship | Code |
|---|-------------|
| Internal locus of control | SE1 |
| Achievement motivation | SE2 |
| Eagerness for independence | SE3 |
| Moderate tendency to take risks | SE4 |
| Present features and abilities of a entrepreneurial man; participation in public undertakings which let them develop | SE5 (PL) |

The system of education in Poland after the reform in 1999



upper secondary vocational
 upper secondary general

compulsory part-time education
 compulsory full-time education

The reform of National Core Curriculum (2009/2010)

- New national core curriculum contains new teaching contents, which are integrated within lower and upper secondary school (teaching contents in gymnasium are not repeated in lyceum).
- The regulations of national core curriculum include (for every subject):
 - Teaching objectives – general requirements,
 - Teaching contents – detailed requirements.
- From school year 2009/2010 author's school curricula are no longer approved by the Ministry of National Education, but only by school headmaster after the opinion of teaching staff meeting.

National & author's curricula

- According to the new core curriculum the authors have the right to add their own contents (teaching requirements) and make one's own school curriculum.
- In school practice, it turns out that teachers most often carry out curricula which were prepared by publishing companies offering textbooks to the given subject.
- We chose 2 school curricula which are the most popular among teachers, in terms of the number of sold textbooks.

National core curriculum

– results (1)

- The results of analysis of new core curriculum of general education indicate that developing business competences are done first of all within **civic education**, but also in **mathematics**, **Polish language** and **family life education**.
- The analysis indicates that the school should equip the pupils with **economic knowledge relatively well**. Significant deficiencies in the records of core curriculum occur in the content connected with the market forms (E7).

National core curriculum

– results (2)

- ❑ Business competences are developed within the civic education (but to a less extent).
- ❑ **Significant gaps** in records of the NCC include the contents associated with the structure of the corporate strategy and planning (**B2**), with directing people, including leadership, relationship and communication between managers and employees (**B4**), because records of the core curriculum are limited only to ethical issues in this respect.
- ❑ There is **complete lack** in teaching contents associated with controlling and accountings principles (**B5**), with production and operation management (**B7**) and with administration (**B9**).
- ❑ Notations of curriculum contents were broadened by issues of the “black economy” and the corruption, which on account of its large meaning in contemporary economy, were distinguished as an **additional criterion (B10 PL)**.

National core curriculum

– results (3)

- ❑ Social competences based on the records of the core curriculum should be developed mainly during lessons of Polish language and family life education.
- ❑ What can seem surprising, it isn't possible to find applying regulations of this competence in the civic education subject.
- ❑ The analysis of records in the core curriculum indicates that **well carried out** contents should be in communication ability (**SO1**) and in recognizing and solving conflicts (**SO2**).
- ❑ However, the core curriculum **lack** teaching contents associated with the ability to give and receive criticism (**SO3**) and with empathy (**SO5**).
- ❑ A particularly substantial **lack** in the records one should regard developing the skills of team cooperation (**SO4**).

National core curriculum

– results (4)

- ❑ Analysis of records of the core curriculum concerning self-competences associated with the entrepreneurship (SE) shows that practically they **do not occur** in teaching contents.
- ❑ Only a notation of teaching contents associated with making plans for further education may refer (at least not without the doubt) to the developing the entrepreneurial attitude (**SE2**).
- ❑ As a basic teaching content at lower secondary school in Poland in this regard one should however acknowledge the record “present features and abilities of a entrepreneurial man; participate in public undertakings which let them develop” which was distinguished here as a **separate criterion**, peculiar to the Polish situation (**SE 5 PL**).

Evaluation of the curriculum in economic/ business/prevocational education by the teachers' point of view (importance of 4 competencies)

How would teachers rate the importance of the four competencies, knowledge based competence in economic and business, social competence and self competence with emphasis on entrepreneurial thinking according to the curriculum?

| | |
|--|----------|
| Knowledge based competence on economics | 5 |
| Knowledge based competence in business | 1 |
| Social competence | 3 |
| Self competence with emphasis on entrepreneurial thinking | 2 |

The strengths and weaknesses of the curriculum in economic/ business/prevocational education from the teacher's point of view

| | Strengths | Weaknesses |
|----|---|---|
| 1. | Correct selection of teaching contents and topics. | Too early stage of the education, some contents e.g. business education and pre-vocational education should appear at the consecutive, higher stage. |
| 2. | Universalism of the values included in the school curriculum. | Stretched time of the realization of the school curriculum. |
| 3. | Proper selection of the proportion of topics within the scope of 4 competencies. | Lack of the time for applying activating methods. |
| 4. | Compliance with the core curriculum. | Lack of themes associated with current social, economic and political events in the country, in the EU and in the world. |
| 5. | In the basic scope sufficient number of hours for the realization of school curriculum. | Realization of the school curriculum in 1st and 2nd class what causes the break between the end of the learning and the lower secondary school (gymnasium) examination. |
| 6. | The school curriculum does not require special conditions for the accomplishment. | Too few subjects from the scope of the pre-vocational education |

Teachers' interviews - interpretation

- ❑ Interviews with teachers were being conducted in the special situation associated with implementing the new core curriculum since 2009 civics and of new school curriculum of this subject.
- ❑ Moreover, in the Polish educational system the contents associated with teaching of entrepreneurship in equipping the pupil with the economic knowledge as well as social, business and self competencies are also realized at the higher stage of the education, at post-gymnasium schools.
- ❑ The new core curriculum and school curricula brought in innovative contents resulting from changing political, social and economic reality. They encourage teachers to apply activating methods, out of which amongst pupils projects are most popular. Well educated teachers with the long-standing work experience provide the correct realization of programs.

Teachers' interviews - interpretation

- ❑ A disadvantage of the system of the education is lack of university course preparing them for teaching civics. The knowledge is being acquired on postgraduate studies or as part of specialization with other subjects e.g. with history or geography.
- ❑ Such a system of the education does not guarantee enough time for the realization of all thematic blocks. The teachers supplement the knowledge either in the framework of courses and seminars, or as a self-study education.

Teachers' interviews - interpretation

- ❑ Some teachers showed that there was too early to teach about vocational education so it should be carried out on the high level of the education. Therefore, even a proposal arose to remove this module from the core curriculum of civics. Such teachers' attitude results also from the lack of an interest in themes connected with the labour market.
- ❑ The majority of pupils of gymnasium choose the further learning at the comprehensive secondary school. In consequence, the selection of an occupation takes place at the post-gymnasium school.
- ❑ Remaining teachers claimed, that there is a lack of direct transfer of the prevocational education for the choice of further education.

Social partners – distribution by economic activities

| Activities | unions/ employee committees | employer organisations/ employers |
|--|-----------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Agriculture, forestry, fishing & mining | | |
| Automotive | | |
| Construction | | 1 |
| Transporting & Storage | | 1 |
| Civil Service | | |
| Financial, Insurance & Real Estate | | 1 |
| Human health and social work activities | | |
| Production (manufacturing – section C) - Manufacture of parts and accessories for motor vehicles) | | 1 |
| Accommodation and food service activities (section G) Retail sale of food, beverages and tobacco in specialised stores) | | 1 |
| Information and communication | | 1 |
| Professional, scientific and technical activities | | |
| Other | | |
| Education (section P) - Higher education | 1 | |
| Other service activities (section S) - Hairdressing and other beauty treatment | | 1 |
| Sales (section G) - Retail sale of other goods in specialised stores | | 1 |
| All industries | 2 | 1 |

Source according to the Statistical Classification of Economic Activities in the European Community, Rev. 2 (2008)

Social partners - the importance of the four competencies

| | unions/ employee committees* | employer organisations/ employers** |
|---|------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| knowledge based competencies in economics | | |
| knowledge based competencies on business | 1 | |
| social competencies | 1 | 2 |
| self competencies with emphasis on entrepreneurial thinking | 2 | 6 |

* one of the interviewees did not answer the question (sum of answers is 8)

**one of the organizations was represented by two people who had different opinions (sum is 4)

Social partners - evaluation of the competencies of young school leavers (graduates)

| | Graduates are very qualified | | Graduates are moderately qualified | | Graduates are slightly qualified | | Graduates are not qualified | |
|---|------------------------------|-----|------------------------------------|----|----------------------------------|----|-----------------------------|----|
| | U* | EO* | U | EO | U | EO | U | EO |
| knowledge-based competencies in economics | | 1 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 5 | | 1 |
| knowledge-based competencies in business | | | 2 | 3 | 2 | 3 | | 2 |
| social competencies | | 1 | 3 | 3 | 1 | 4 | | |
| self competencies (with the focus on entrepreneurial thinking and acting) | | 1 | 1 | 1 | 3 | 5 | | |

* U - unions/ employee committees

** EO - employer organisations/ employers

Social partners - how important is it for the interviewed organisations to establish the competencies?

| | 1= unimportant | | 2= somewhat important | | 3=more or less important / unimportant | | 4=important | | 5= very important | |
|---|----------------|------|-----------------------|----|--|----|-------------|----|-------------------|----|
| | U* | EO** | U | EO | U | EO | U | EO | U | EO |
| knowledge-based competencies in economics | | | | 1 | 3 | 5 | 1 | 2 | | |
| knowledge-based competencies in business | | | | 1 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 2 | | 3 |
| social competencies | | | | | 1 | 2 | | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| self competencies (with the focus on entrepreneurial thinking and acting) | | | | | 1 | | 1 | 4 | 2 | 4 |

* U - unions/ employee committees

** EO - employer organisations/ employers

Social partners - do the interviewed organisations know the curriculum and play the role in establishing it?

| | Yes | In parts | No |
|-----------------------------------|-----|----------|----|
| Unions/ employee committees | | 2 | 1 |
| Employer organisations/ employers | | 2 | 7 |

- ❑ Both the representatives of small trade unions and employers admitted that in practice they not much were interested in it, because it isn't connected directly with the operations of the organization or the company.
- ❑ They think, that school education is set rather to handing over to the economic knowledge, rather than developing of social or personal competences connected with the entrepreneurship.
- ❑ Interviewed partners do not participate directly in establishing the core or school curricula.
- ❑ In the majority view of employers they should not or they do not want to affect the curriculum-making process.

Social partners - cooperation with schools

| | Yes | Sometimes | No |
|---|-----|-----------|----|
| Unions/ employee committees | | 1 | 2 |
| Employer organisations/ employers | 3 | 2 | 2 |

| | Unions/ employee committees | Employer organisatio n/ employers |
|--|-----------------------------------|--|
| Internships | | 2 |
| Industrial visits, practice and engineering theses | | 1 |
| Contracts with schools | | |
| Together organised post-graduate courses | | 1 |
| Joint educational projects carried out with schools | 1 | |
| The presentations of special building products for students who can use them later in their job. | | 1 |

Social partners - experience of teachers

- ❑ In the opinion of managers of companies, teachers are poorly prepared for developing business competence.
- ❑ Respondents - the owners of micro and small companies who has recently started their business - think that school has not prepared them for this role at all.
- ❑ It results from the fact of the lack of experience in business, peculiarly in case of teachers who directly after studies started work at school.
- ❑ It causes the fact that they stress the knowledge associated with economic issues - it is simplest to teach.

Conclusions

- ❑ In the stage of the lower secondary school which was a subject of special interest in this project, new contents were entered into civic education associated with business competencies.
- ❑ The analysis of the new National Curriculum and school curricula at a lower secondary level (gymnasium) indicates that a pupil should be relatively well equipped with essential economic knowledge.

Conclusions

- ❑ However, significant gaps do exist in developing competencies for running a business, mainly managerial skills.
- ❑ Moreover, development of social competencies, apart from the communication skills introduced during Polish lessons, is missing. This includes conflict management skills associated with problem-solving and teamwork.
- ❑ Another missing section deals with self-competencies associated with entrepreneurial attitude

Conclusions

- The interviews conducted with teachers showed that in their opinion in the core curriculum the content in competencies associated with economic knowledge prevails, but they are aware that social and self-competencies are very important.
- However, in the opinion of employers and other social partners in Polish schools too great an emphasis continues to be put on theoretical knowledge in economics, but too little attention is paid to developing the social competencies necessary in every work.

Conclusions

- The analyses conducted allow us to make the following practical conclusions on educational policy:
 - The core curriculum should be modified a little, introducing new regulations which will be well disposed to developing social and self-competencies associated with entrepreneurship, and to limit somewhat the educational content associated with equipping pupils with economic knowledge.
 - It seems necessary to distinguish a separate subject aimed at teaching of business competencies at lower secondary school, because within civic education educational content in this respect is marginalised.

Conclusions

- Special training seems necessary for teachers for teaching this subject (as postgraduate or training courses); owing to financial barriers such action should be largely financed from public means.
- The number of hours of business education at the lower secondary school should be increased, at least up to 30 hours in the cycle of the education.
- It is necessary to work out and implement together with social partners procedures facilitating the cooperation of schools with social organisations at national level, covering the direct involvement of representatives of employers and trade unions in education.

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**Thank you
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