

Edukacja szkolna podstawą edukacji całościowej

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Abstrakt. *Wypracowane w latach 70. wytyczne dotyczące przygotowania młodzieży do aktywnego wejścia na rynek pracy i uczestnictwa w nim nie straciły na aktualności, wręcz przeciwnie – przyjmują współcześnie rangę priorytetów. Dokonujące się przemiany rynku pracy wpływają na zmianę filozofii edukacji polegającą na integracji celów oraz treści kształcenia ogólnego i zawodowego. W tym kontekście znaczenie szkoły w procesach globalnych rośnie, a edukacja szkolna postrzegana jest jako podstawa edukacji całościowej.*

Słowa kluczowe: *edukacja szkolna, rynek pracy, edukacja całościowa*

School education as the foundation for lifelong education

Abstract. *The guidelines for preparing young people to actively “enter” and participate in the labour market, established in the 1970s, have not become out of date. On the contrary, they have assumed even greater importance. The transformation of the labour market entails the change of philosophy of education, which consists in the integration of the aims and teaching contents of general and vocational education. In this context, the role of school in global processes is becoming increasingly important, and school education is regarded as the foundation for lifelong education.*

Key words: *school education, labour market, lifelong education*

Problematyka przygotowania młodzieży do aktywnego „wejścia” w rynek pracy i funkcjonowania na nim nie jest nowa. Dyskusja nad konsekwencjami kształcenia ustawicznego dla szkoły doprowadziła do zorganizowania już w 1974 r. w Warszawie, przy współudziale UNESCO, międzynarodowej konferencji na temat „Szkoła i edukacja permanentna”. Ryszard Wroczyński podjął próbę podsumowania osiągnięć konferencji, formułując ogólne tendencje rozwoju oświaty. Oto kilka z nich:

1. Drabina szkolna zatracza charakter zamkniętego toru szkolnego, staje się systemem otwartym, prowadzącym do dalszych ogniw procesu edukacyjnego obejmującego profesjonalne życie człowieka.
2. Następuje silne sprzężenie szkoły jako instytucji wychowawczej z ogólnym procesem rozwoju społeczno-ekonomicznego. Wynika stąd, że planowanie obejmuje też pozaszkolne instytucje wychowawcze i oświatowe.
3. Szkoła zatracza charakter zamkniętego środowiska wychowawczego izolującego młodzież od bezpośrednich styczności społecznych i kulturowych. Integruje się ze środowiskiem pozaszkolnym.
4. Wiek szkolny powinien rozbudzić motywację do dalszego kształcenia się, do rozwijania i doskonalenia posiadanej wiedzy i kwalifikacji zawodowych. Najłatwiej te cechy rozbudzić w wieku przed-szkolnym i wczesnoszkolnym.
5. Preferuje się te metody nauczania, które prowadzą do rozwijania samodzielności rozumowania, umiejętności wykorzystywania różnych źródeł informacji, stawiania problemów i ich rozwiązywania¹.

Te wypracowane jeszcze w latach 70. wytyczne nie straciły na aktualności, wręcz przeciwnie – przyjmują współcześnie rangę priorytetów. Proces ten wzmacnia gospodarka wolnorynkowa, która oczekuje od przyszłych uczestników procesów gospodarczych specyficznych umiejętności, takich jak:

- określenie własnej roli i miejsca na rynku pracy zgodnie z posiadanymi umiejętnościami, predyspozycjami i zainteresowaniami,
- podejmowanie oraz prowadzenie samodzielnej działalności gospodarczej, zgodnie z prawem, zgodnie z zasadami zarządzania i marketingu,

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¹ R. Wroczyński: *Edukacja permanentna*, Warszawa 1973.

- prezentowanie swoich umiejętności i predyspozycji zawodowych przez wykorzystanie stosownej dokumentacji podczas rozmowy kwalifikacyjnej,
- planowanie własnych działań,
- umiejętność prezentowania twórczego podejścia do rozwiązywania problemów,
- analizowanie zachodzących wokół zjawisk społeczno-gospodarczych,
- organizowanie własnego środowiska pracy.

Dokonujące się przemiany rynku pracy wpływają na zmianę filozofii edukacji, polegającą na integracji celów oraz treści kształcenia ogólnego i zawodowego. W tym kontekście znaczenie szkoły w procesach globalnych rośnie. To właśnie w szkole większość Europejczyków spędza co najmniej dzie więć lub dziesięć lat swojego życia. W niej otrzymują podstawową wiedzę i umiejętności. Tam kształtują się ich postawy, przekonania, system wartości, tam rozwijają się intelektualnie i emocjonalnie, tam wreszcie przygotowują się do życia w nowoczesnym świecie². Są to argumenty, które uzasadniają konieczność, by to właśnie szkoła „umieściła ludzi na ścieżce uczenia się przez całe życie”³. Znaczenie szkoły w procesach edukacji całościowej eksponują wszystkie najnowsze raporty Komisji Europejskiej. Wzywają wręcz do większych inwestycji w kapitał ludzki przez lepszą edukację⁴.

Współcześnie nikt nie zaprzeczy, że solidna edukacja wyniesiona ze szkoły powinna tworzyć podstawy dobrej pracy zawodowej. W procesach dydaktycznych widoczne jest położenie nacisku na uczenie się oraz ukształtowanie u uczniów takich cech i kompetencji, jak: otwartość, wyobraźnia, inicjatywa, odpowiedzialność, przedsiębiorczość, samodzielność, innowacyjność, rzetelność czy umiejętność współżycia i współdziałania w zespole. Także wprowadzenie do programów nauczania umiejętności korzystania z komputera i Internetu oraz nauki języków obcych powinny stanowić bazę dla lepszych perspektyw zatrudnienia i gotowości do przekwalifikowywania się⁵. Do pomyślnego funkcjonowania w społeczeństwie

² Por. A. Karpińska: *Edukacja szkolna podstawą edukacji całościowej*, [w:] *Edukacja ustawiczna. Wymiar teoretyczny i praktyczny*, red. S. M. Kwiatkowski, Warszawa-Radom 2008, s. 61.

³ Dokument roboczy służb Komisji Wspólnot Europejskich, *Szkoły na miarę XXI wieku*, Bruksela, 11 lipca 2007, s. 4.

⁴ Tamże.

⁵ Z. Wiatrowski: *Podstawy pedagogiki pracy*, Bydgoszcz 2000, s. 29.

opartym na wiedzy niezbędne staje się wykształcenie podczas szkolnej edukacji kluczowych kompetencji. Interesujące ujęcie kompetencji kluczowych z punktu widzenia polityki i rynku pracy zaproponował Dieter Martens: kluczowe kompetencje to takie, dzięki którym jednostka potrafi reagować na nowe wyzwania i nieprzewidywalne trudności w taki sposób, że raz rozwiązana sytuacja problemowa staje się dla niej doświadczeniem, dzięki któremu zdobywa i zachowuje na przyszłość kolejne kwalifikacje zawodowe⁶. W szerokim ujęciu, kompetencje kluczowe to ogół wiedzy, zdolności i umiejętności oraz takie postawy, dzięki którym możliwe jest rozwiązywanie społecznych problemów⁷. Zauważając to znaczenie do aspektów pedagogiki pracy, można przyjąć, że są to takie kwalifikacje funkcjonalne i ponadzawodowe, dzięki którym możliwe jest radzenie sobie z wyzwaniami sytuacji zawodowych⁸. Jednakże o wiele częściej zwraca się uwagę na fakt, że kształtowanie kompetencji kluczowych wspomaga holistyczny rozwój osobowości. Dzięki nim jednostka może aktywnie funkcjonować zawodowo, społecznie i towarzysko.

Troska o jakość edukacji szkolnej była motywacją dla wielu krajów do włączenia w programy nauczania kompetencji kluczowych. Istotne dla wzrostu zainteresowania zagadnieniem były „zacieśniająca się współpraca międzynarodowa, szybki postęp naukowo-techniczny, szczególnie w obszarze technologii informacyjnych i komunikacyjnych, oraz coraz bardziej skomplikowane ścieżki kariery zawodowej absolwentów”⁹. Jednocześnie ze wzrostem znaczenia kształtowania kompetencji w szkolnictwie wzrasta ranga edukacji całościowej (*lifelong learning*). W programach nauczania eksponowane jest coraz częściej odpowiednie, praktyczne wykorzystywanie wiadomości i umiejętności, a nie ich teoretyczny przekaz.

Listę kompetencji dyktują zmieniające się czasy, unieważniając lub marginalizując jedne na rzecz innych¹⁰. Niezależnie od różnic w interpretacji pojęcia, eksperci opracowujący raport *Kluczowe kompetencje*

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⁶ D. Mertens: *Schlüsselqualifikationen*, „Mitteilungen aus Arbeitsmarkt und Berufsforschung” München 1974, Heft 7, s. 37.

⁷ Por. W. Furmanek: *Kompetencje. Próba określenia pojęcia*, „Edukacja Ogólnotechniczna Inaczej” 1997, nr 7.

⁸ H. Beck: *Schlüsselqualifikationen - Bildung im Wandel*, Darmstadt 1995, s. 17.

⁹ J. Podgórska: *Co trzeba umieć w XXI wieku*, „Polityka” 2007, nr 8, s. 31.

¹⁰ Tamże, s. 23.

(*Key Competences*) są zdania, że kompetencje, by mogły zasługiwać na miano kluczowych, powinny oznaczać coś ważnego i korzystnego dla jednostki i społeczeństwa, „coś, co umożliwi jednostce pomyślnie integrować się z różnymi grupami społecznymi, przy jednoczesnym zachowaniu niezależności i umiejętności sprawnego działania zarówno w znanym jak i nieznanym otoczeniu”¹¹. Jednakże bardzo trudno jest określić jednoznacznie ich kanon, gdyż wymaga to rzetelnej oceny współczesności oraz trafnego prognozowania. Umiejętności i wiedza przekazywane uczniom mają przecież służyć im w przyszłości i ułatwiać odnajdywanie się często w zupełnie nowych zawodach. Dobrym przykładem jest fakt, że pierwsze dziesięć na liście najbardziej pożądanych w Stanach Zjednoczonych zawodów istnieje od 2004 r., a za kilkanaście lat wielu ludzi nie będzie w stanie rozpoznać swoich zawodów, gdyż tak wiele się zmieni z powodu nowoczesnych technologii¹². Nie sposób jednak planować procesu edukacyjnego bez przedłożenia określonych celów. Stąd koniecznym warunkiem jest opracowanie wytycznych dla instytucji oświatowych, które pomogą dookreślić najlepszy kierunek kształcenia młodego pokolenia.

Taką próbę podjął Tony Wagner, dyrektor Change Leadership Group na Uniwersytecie Harvardzkim, a swoje wnioski przedstawił na forum członków Stowarzyszenia Dyrektorów Technologii Edukacyjnych SETDA (State Educational Technology Directors Association), zorganizowanym w 2002 r. w Waszyngtonie. Wagner uważał, że poprawa globalnej sytuacji ekonomicznej zależy w dużej mierze od zmian w systemie kształcenia. Podkreślał, że to co zapewnia uczniom sukces na globalnym rynku pracy, przyczynia się również do ich życiowego powodzenia. Rynek pracy jest tu częścią rzeczywistości społecznej, w której dochodzi do transakcji kupna i sprzedaży pracy. Podobnie jak w przypadku rynku towarowego, finansowego czy usług, w warunkach wolnej konkurencji istnieje zjawisko podaży pracy i popytu na pracę. W trakcie forum apelował: „potrzebujemy osób, które potrafią zadawać dobre pytania i tych, którzy umieją innych angażować do głębokiego dialogu”¹³. Kilka lat później, w 2008 r. została wydana *Mapa umiejętności XXI wieku*. Mimo różnic ekonomicznych

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¹¹ *Kluczowe kompetencje. Realizacja koncepcji na poziomie szkolnictwa obowiązkowego*, oprac. Eurydice, Bruksela 2002, s. 14.

¹² A. Karpińska: *Edukacja szkolna podstawą...*, dz. cyt., s. 62.

¹³ Por. M. Polak: *Mapa społecznych umiejętności XXI wieku*, <<http://www.edunews.pl/system-edukacji/522-mapa-spoecznych-umiejtnosci-xxi-wieku>>, (data dostępu: 12.06.2009).

i kulturowych, wnioski postawione w Stanach Zjednoczonych są zbieżne z postulatami promowanymi przez kraje europejskie.

Mapa umiejętności XXI wieku, wydana przez Partnership for Century Skills (Partnerstwo dla umiejętności) we współpracy z National Council for Social Studies (Narodowe Centrum Badań Społecznych) jest opracowaniem zawierającym spis najważniejszych kompetencji, celów kształcenia oraz przykładowych sposobów ich realizacji z uwzględnieniem różnych szczebli edukacji – od szkoły podstawowej po liceum. Można powiedzieć, że jest swoistym katalogiem umiejętności społecznych, które przez specjalistów zostały uznane za niezbędne do pełnego funkcjonowania w społeczeństwie XXI w. Umiejętności zostały w tym dokumencie ujęte w następujące obszary kompetencji:

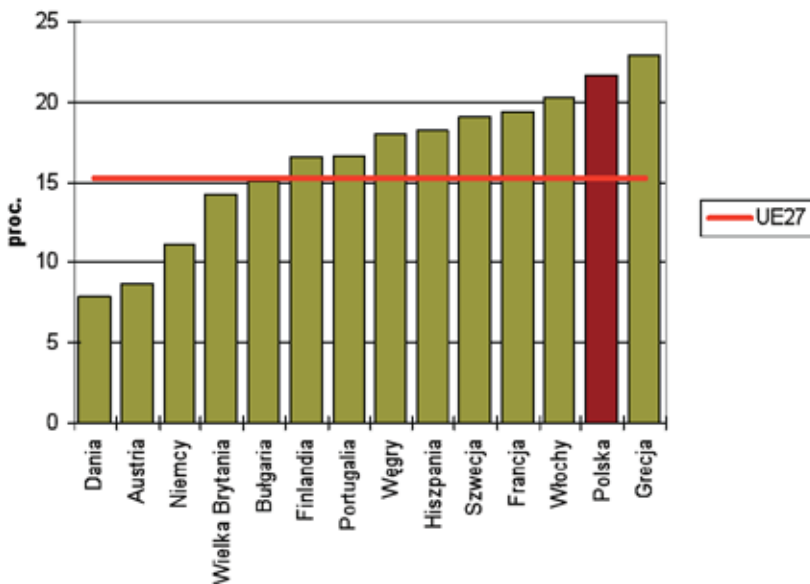
- kreatywność i innowacyjność,
- krytyczne myślenie i rozwiązywanie problemów,
- komunikowanie,
- kolaboracja – współpraca w ramach grup/społeczności,
- alfabetyzm informacyjny (umiejętność wyszukiwania i analizowania informacji oraz zarządzania nią,
- alfabetyzm medialny (umiejętność korzystania z cyfrowych mediów),
- sprawność posługiwania się narzędziami technologii informacyjno-komunikacyjnej (czyli ICT)
- elastyczność i adaptacyjność (umiejętność dostosowania się do zmieniających się warunków),
- inicjatywa i samodzielne decydowanie o swoim życiu,
- umiejętność funkcjonowania w zróżnicowanym i wielokulturowym środowisku,
- produktywność,
- umiejętności lideryckie i odpowiedzialność¹⁴.

Mapa umiejętności XXI wieku została uznana za dobre źródło inspiracji w pracy nauczycielskiej. Jej polską wersję, dostosowaną do uwarunkowań polskiego systemu edukacji, opracowała Fundacja „Teraz Polska”.

Kształtowanie umiejętności służy rozwijaniu aktywnych społecznie jednostek, które potrafią wykorzystać zdobytą wiedzę w działaniu. Tym samym szkoła może mieć znaczący wpływ na dalsze losy absolwentów: osobiste

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¹⁴ Tamże.

i zawodowe. Dopasowanie systemu kształcenia do potrzeb rynku pracy ma zatem znaczący wpływ na perspektywy zawodowe absolwentów¹⁵. Jak podkreślają autorzy raportu *Czego (nie) uczą polskie szkoły?*¹⁶, w dzisiejszych czasach nie liczą się wyłącznie dobrze wykształceni absolwenci, lecz osoby dysponujące poszukiwanymi umiejętnościami i kompetencjami zawodowymi, które to łatwiej podejmują prace niż osoby młode bez tych atutów. Sytuację bezrobocia wśród najmłodszej grupy zdolnej do podjęcia pracy – czyli poniżej 25 r.ż. – obrazuje Ryc. 1. Konsekwencje początkowego wykształcenia dotyczą całego życia, bowiem to zdobyte w szkole wiedza i umiejętności stanowią bazę, która jest jedynie uzupełniana doświadczeniem zawodowym czy też szkoleniami podejmowanymi w okresie zatrudnienia¹⁷.



Ryc. 1. Odsetek bezrobotnych wśród ludzi młodych (poniżej 25 r.ż.); źródło: U. Sztanderska, W. Wojciechowski: *Raport czego (nie) uczą polskie szkoły. System edukacji a potrzeby rynku pracy*, Warszawa 2008, s. 50.

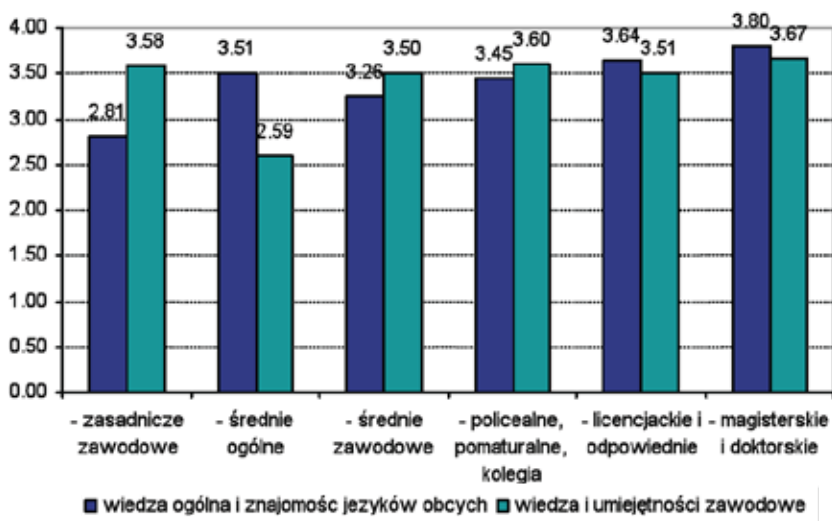
Zadanie ułatwienie wejścia absolwentom szkół na rynek pracy przypisane jest szkole. Jednak jak pokazują wyniki badań (Ryc. 2) uczniowie

¹⁵ Z. Wiatrowski: *Podstawy...*, dz. cyt., s. 44.

¹⁶ U. Sztanderska, W. Wojciechowski: *Raport czego (nie) uczą polskie szkoły. System edukacji a potrzeby rynku pracy*, Warszawa 2008.

¹⁷ Por. Z. Wiatrowski: *Powodzenia i niepowodzenia szkolne pracujących*, Warszawa 1975.

źle oceniają swoje przygotowanie do życia zawodowego. W całościowej ocenie programu kształcenia najgorzej wypadła ocena nauczania języków obcych, zwłaszcza w szkołach zasadniczych i w średnich szkołach zawodowych. Najlepiej oceniano ją na studiach magisterskich i w liceach ogólnokształcących. Drugim stosunkowo słabo ocenianym elementem edukacji okazało się prowadzenie praktyk. Najlepiej wypadły tu zasadnicze szkoły zawodowe i szkoły zawodowe, a najgorzej średnie szkoły zawodowe i licea ogólnokształcące. Podsumowując uzyskane wyniki badań można powiedzieć, że najsłabszym ogniwem kształcenia okazały się umiejętności praktyczne, gdyż znajomość języka obcego również ma walor praktyczny¹⁸. Różnice w przygotowaniu uczniów do wejścia w rynek pracy mogą kierować uwagę na atrakcyjność poszczególnych szkół w odbiorze uczniów i podejmowane wybory dalszego kształcenia po wspólnym dla wszystkich etapach obowiązkowego kształcenia w gimnazjum.

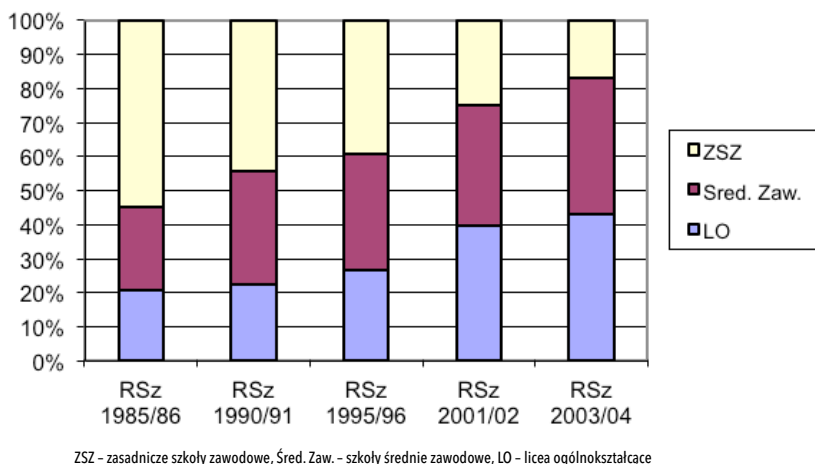


Ryc. 2. Ocena absolwentów dotycząca wiedzy ogólnej i znajomości języków obcych oraz wiedzy i umiejętności zawodowych wyniesionych ze szkół i uczelni; źródło: U. Sztanderska, W. Wojciechowski, *Raport czego (nie) uczy polskie szkoły. System edukacji a potrzeby rynku pracy*, Warszawa 2008, s. 33.

Zaproponowana absolwentom gimnazjów drożna i elastyczna struktura szkolnictwa ponadgimnazjalnego miała umożliwić im projektowanie

¹⁸ Tamże, s. 33.

i realizację indywidualnej ścieżki edukacji szkolnej i zawodowej. Zmiany w wyborze dalszej drogi kształcenia po gimnazjum na przestrzeni lat 1985–2004 ukazuje Ryc. 3. Można powiedzieć, że na etapie szkoły gimnazjalnej młody człowiek musi podjąć najtrudniejszą w swoim życiu decyzję wyboru dalszej drogi: kształcenia ogólnego bądź zawodowego. Bez względu jednak na wybór musi być wyposażony w umiejętności podstawowe, które przenoszą ciężar nauczania na uczenie się i przygotowują do kształcenia całościowego (permanentnego). Młodzież przygotowana do kształcenia permanentnego będzie chciała i potrafiła korzystać z bogactwa ofert różnego typu instytucji także w życiu dorosłym, szukając możliwości doskonalenia zawodowego, a także rozszerzania oraz pogłębiania zainteresowań i wykształcenia wyniesionego ze szkoły. Nawet w okresie poprodukcyjnym ludzie starsi chętniej i odważniej będą korzystać z pomocy innych placówek, urozmaicając w korzystny sposób swoje życie i wspomagając innych.



Ryc. 3. Zmiany odsetka młodzieży wybierającej edukację w określonych typach szkół średnich w Polsce na przestrzeni lat

Wzrost zainteresowania kształceniem ogólnym wzmocnia konieczność przygotowania uczniów już na tym etapie do zetknięcia się z realiami rynku, w tym szczególnie rynku pracy, a także kształtowania postaw przedsiębiorczych. Przemiany, jakie dokonały się w Polsce po 1989 r.,

doprowadziły do odejścia od gospodarki sterowanej centralnie i wprowadzenia gospodarki rynkowej. Poskutkowało to zmianami w życiu społecznym i gospodarczym. Zmianie uległa funkcja pracy. Dotychczas była on prawem i obowiązkiem, a dziś stała się towarem, którego podaż przewyższa popyt. Wartość wykształcenia zdobytego w szkole, które wcześniej było najważniejszym atutem przy podejmowaniu pracy, przestało wystarczać, a rynkiem pracy zaczęły kierować prawa konkurencyjności. To trudna sytuacja, jednak od tego, jak poradzi sobie z nią polska szkoła, zależeć będzie stan krajowej gospodarki.

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School as a community centre and resource: the case of Latvia

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Abstract. *In 2009 a large number of small, predominantly rural schools in Latvia were threatened with closure because of the austerity measures due to the fiscal and economic crisis. Student numbers were also decreasing due to various demographic factors. In order to support schools still needed by their communities and with the capacity to serve the community in more than one way by providing formal education for school age students, the Soros Foundation – Latvia (SFL), a non-governmental organization with the financial support of the Open Society Foundations, started the initiative "Change Opportunities for Schools" to provide support for local schools to develop into multifunctional community centers. The initiative was designed by national experts and led by a core team. An evaluation of the results of interventions was carried out in 2010 and 2013. Both quantitative and qualitative data acquisition and analysis methods were used, covering a wide range of target groups including school management, teachers, and representatives of local governments, local inhabitants, education and rural development experts. The paper links experience gained in Latvia with the broader history and practice of community schools in different countries, as well as revealing aspects identified in the study that have been at the basis of strategy to diversify the functions of small schools in Latvia to become a multifunctional community center – community school. On the basis on the results of the initiative, it can be confirmed that community school development in Latvia is a social and educational innovation with great potential, although insufficient current political and financial support determines the sustainability risks of the model.*

Key words: *community school, extended functions of school, civic participation, community development, education policy*

Szkoła jako ośrodek krzewienia oświaty i kultury. Przykład łotwy

Abstrakt. *W 2009 r. wiele małych, głównie wiejskich szkół na Łotwie stanęło w obliczu groźby zamknięcia z uwagi na wprowadzenie drastycznych środków oszczędnościowych, spowodowanych kryzysem fiskalnym i gospodarczym. Równocześnie zmniejszeniu uległa liczba uczniów, co było wywołane różnymi czynnikami demograficznymi. Aby wesprzeć szkoły, na które w dalszym ciągu istniało zapotrzebowanie ze strony społeczności lokalnych, w takim stopniu, aby zakres ich działalności nie ograniczał się wyłącznie do zapewniania formalnej edukacji dzieciom i młodzieży w wieku szkolnym, łotewski oddział Fundacji Sorosa – organizacja pozarządowa wspierana finansowo przez Fundację Społeczeństwa Otwartego – zapoczątkował inicjatywę „Możliwości zmian dla szkół”, mającą na celu udzielenie lokalnym szkołom wsparcia, tak aby mogły pełnić także funkcję ośrodków krzewienia kultury. Założenia przedsięwzięcia zostały opracowane przez ekspertów krajowych, a kierowanie jego realizacją powierzono zespołowi ekspertów. W 2010 r. i ponownie w 2013 r. dokonano oceny rezultatów podjętych działań interwencyjnych. Analizie zostały poddane zarówno dane ilościowe, jak i jakościowe, obejmujące wiele rozmaitych grup docelowych – kadre zarządzającą szkół, nauczycieli, przedstawicieli władz lokalnych, członków społeczności lokalnej, ekspertów ds. rozwoju oświaty oraz ekspertów ds. rozwoju obszarów wiejskich. Artykuł prezentuje doświadczenia łotewskie na tle doświadczeń szkół środowiskowych działających w innych krajach. Omówiono w nim także założenia strategii dywersyfikacji funkcji pełnionych przez małe szkoły łotewskie, służącej przekształceniu ich w wielofunkcyjne ośrodki oświatowo-kulturalne. Efekty przedsięwzięcia potwierdzają, że transformacja szkół środowiskowych na Łotwie niesie w sobie wielki potencjał społeczny i edukacyjny, aczkolwiek brak wystarczającego wsparcia politycznego i finansowego może doprowadzić do zanichania jego realizacji.*

Słowa kluczowe: *szkoła środowiskowa, poszerzone funkcje szkoły, udział obywatelski, rozwój społeczności lokalnej, polityka oświatowa*

Introduction

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Since the end of the 20th century, rapid and deep changes on a global, national or local level, have exerted a significant influence on educational practices and policies, as well as the educational paradigm in general. The daily activities of a school and school teachers have been directly affected by the increase in the speed and volume of information, migration and globalization, the presence of postmodern pluralism values, an increase in social and cultural diversity and a number of other factors. The issue of how to assess a school's effectiveness and the quality of its results, thus balancing the principles and economic indicators with humanistic pedagogy is becoming increasingly topical. The recent global financial crises which started in 2008 made these challenges for governments and systems of education even more difficult. In 2009 a large number of small, predominantly rural schools in Latvia were earmarked for closure by local governments owing to government budget cuts as a result of austerity measures necessitated by the fiscal and economic crisis. At the same time, the tightening of the school network was necessitated by falling student numbers in Latvia resulting from demographic change. Nevertheless, in the event of indiscriminate closure of all schools with too few pupils, many communities would have been left with much poorer access to education and virtually without a centre for social and cultural activities.

This rapidly changing reality leads to an increasing need for education and its assessment to become "capable of capturing aspects of context, perspective, and the attributions that come to be assigned to these conditional phenomena. The exactness and precision that have been gained by de-contextualization in the past will be challenged by the situativity required when contextualism and perspectivism are required for understanding."¹

In order to support those schools still needed by their communities and with the capacity to serve the community in more than one way by providing formal education for school age students, the Soros Foundation - Latvia (SFL), a non-governmental organization with the financial support of the Open Society Foundations, started the initiative "Change

¹ The Gordon Commission on the Future of Assessment in Education, *Outlines of a Commission Paper, "Assessment, Teaching, and Learning"*, 2012, nr 2(2), p.7. Retrieved from: <http://www.gordoncommission.org/rsc/pdfs/vol_2_no_2_18704.pdf>, (05.12.2013).

Opportunities for Schools” to provide support to local schools to develop into multifunctional community centres.

The goal of the initiative was defined by the SFL as follows: “to deal with the threat of social disintegration due to the economic crisis by offering a chance of revival to small schools in economically and socially depressed, rural areas, small towns and urban peripheries (with an ethnic minority population) in Latvia by the facilitating school restructuring and community centre development, which involved all stakeholders – parents, teaching staff, students, the local municipality and NGOs, cultural, business agents”.² An open competition for participation in the initiative was announced and 53 applications were selected, giving preferences to the schools that seemed to be open to innovations and wanting to develop new areas of activities, including various forms of support to adults, children and families in the community in the first period of the initiative in 2009. In 2012 the second period of intervention commenced and two groups of participants were selected: 30 out of the previously involved schools/communities and 11 new applicants. All Latvia’s regions have been represented in the initiative, as well as schools/communities with diverse specific contexts and needs in order to develop and pilot models of the community school in Latvia.

The implementation of the initiative has been closely monitored and evaluation studies have been carried out twice (in the period from 2009 to 2013), as this has been an innovative approach to the functions of a school in Latvia and has revealed the significant potential of the community school approach as an innovative solution for the challenges with the school network and access to life-long learning opportunities in Latvia. This paper presents the adaptation of the idea of the community school in Latvia, an overview of interventions already implemented and findings from the study with the main focus on the school as a community resource.

Different approaches to the idea of a community school

The idea of wider functions for schools has been applied in different countries since the late 19th century. With the name of *community school* it has

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² Proposal for the grant „Development of small schools into community learning and culture centres”. Archived materials of the Soros Foundation – Latvia, 2009.

been implemented in the USA³ based on the English model, where for the first time education and health services were brought together in the late 19th century. *Community education* has parallels with sozial pädagogik in Germany, animation in France and socio-cultural work in Belgium, while in other countries it can be related to non-formal education, community participation or popular education in the Latin American tradition. The main idea lies in the theory and practice of democratic education.

Another variation of the community school is *full-service schooling*. The best known researcher and advocate of full-service schooling, Joy Dryfoos, looks at the development of innovative school-based health programs in the late 1970s and early 1980s as the forerunners of the later movement. Dryfoos has defined the full-service school as a school-based health and social services centre, a space “in a school building where services are brought in by outside community agencies in conjunction with school personnel”.⁴ Having significant benefits such as opportunity for schools to open up and encourage a more collaborative culture, full-service schooling in this meaning appears to also have some issues, for example, how concentrating resources in schools affects other community-based initiatives.⁵

Meanwhile, it appears that the terms *full-service*, *community*, and *full-service community schools* often appear almost interchangeably in the literature and policy documents as all these models of schools address the multiple factors which heavily influence student achievement by incorporating services at a school site to provide the academic and non-academic support students need in order to succeed.⁶ One of the strongest organizations promoting school as a set of different services is the Coalition for Community Schools (For more, see the Coalition for Community Schools website). According to their definition, a community school is both “a place and a set of partnerships between the school and other community resources. Its integrated focus on academics, health and social services, youth and

³ See, for example, Campbell-Allen Ricky, Shah Melissa Pena Aekta, Sullender Rebekka, Zazove Rebecca: *Full-Service Schools. Policy Review and Recommendations*, Harvard Graduate School of Education 2009. Retrieved from: <<http://aiooeducationalpolicy.pbworks.com/f/Full+Service+Schools+complete+paperZ.pdf>>, (07.12.2013), pp. 3–9.

⁴ J. Dryfoos, *Full-Service Schools. A revolution in health and social services for children, youth and families*, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1994, p. 142.

⁵ M. K. Smith, *Full-service schooling*, In: *The encyclopaedia of informal education*, (publ. 2000, 2004), retrieved from: <<http://www.infed.org/schooling/f-serv.htm>>, (09.12.2013).

⁶ R. Campbell-Allen et al., op. cit.

community engagement leads to improved student learning, stronger families and healthier communities. Schools become centres of the community and are open to everyone – all day, every day, evenings and weekends”.⁷

In England, the concept of *extended schools* and services was introduced after 2000 with the vision for all schools to provide a range of extended services by 2010.⁸ According to the initiative supported by the UK Training and Development Agency for Schools, extended services in and around schools bring together existing services and organizations to create a coherent offer for pupils and their families. Schools become the point of access to services but at the same time it is not expected that the school staff will be solely responsible for delivering these services. Such services can consist of providing childcare, activities to extend and enrich learning for students (after-school support and homework clubs), offering parenting and family support including learning or children and parents together, specialists’ support, wider community access to ICT, sports, arts facilities, adult learning etc.

In Australia, examples of *integrated services* can be found mostly in the early childhood education and care / preschool services sector with a focus on building social capital; at its core lies an attempt to create a holistic environment to support each child and his or her family.⁹ In the early childhood segment, the Pen Green Centre in England is also widely known as an example of a holistic approach to education and development, where family involvement and connections with the community are seen as a crucial factor in success.¹⁰ Activities in the centre are implemented in three main

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⁷ R. Jacobson, S. S. Jamal, L. Jacobson, M. J. Blank, *The Growing Convergence of Community Schools and Expanded Learning Opportunities*, Washington: Institute for Educational Leadership, 2013, p. 6.

⁸ Training and Development Agency for Schools, *Extended schools – an overview*, London: Training and Development Agency for Schools, 2006. Retrieved from: <<http://clc2.uniservity.com/GroupDownloadFile.asp?GroupID=20081343&ResourceId=3163085>>, (09.12.2013).

⁹ See, for example, F. Press, J. Sumsion, S. Wong, *Integrated Early Years Provision in Australia. A Research Project for the Professional Support Coordinators Alliance (PSCA)*, Bathurst: Charles Sturt University, 2011. Retrieved from: <<http://pscalliance.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2011/FinalCSUreport.pdf>>, (06.12.2013); C. Tayler, D. Cloney, A. Farrell, T. Muscat, *Hubs Report: Child care and family services hubs. Impact study in rural and regional communities*, Brisbane: QUT, 2008. Retrieved from: <<http://eprints.qut.edu.au/26940/>>, (04.12.2013).

¹⁰ See, for example, M. Whalley, *Leadership in Integrated Services and Services for Children and Families. A Community development approach: Engaging with the struggle*, “Childrenz Issues” 2006, nr 10(2), pp. 8–13.

directions: action for children, action for parents, actions towards citizenship, community capacity building and community cohesion.¹¹

There are many more examples of the extended functions of schools and links between schools and communities from other countries; however, they are not known and have not been applied in Latvia. The SFL Initiative to develop schools as multifunctional community centres was perceived as something new, brought about mainly by the need to find the ways to sustain the existence of small rural schools, not realizing their potential for children and local communities.

The situation of small rural schools in Latvia

In Latvia, the establishing comprehensive schools, maintaining their premises and making decisions about whether to close schools is the responsibility of local governments, whereas the salaries for teachers are provided from the state budget. Comprehensive schools are funded in accordance with the model “money follows the student”, which means that the remuneration of teachers is greatly influenced by the student numbers in a particular school. When characterizing the school system in Latvia, it is important to specify that alongside formal education implementation there are strong traditions of interest education, which means that many schoolchildren can stay behind at school after formal lessons and get involved in various informal educational activities. Interest education is financed from a number of sources – the state and municipality’s budget and private resources, but ultimately society has established a belief that interest education is to be provided free of charge and it is almost a duty of any school to provide this kind of education. As a result of the economic crisis around 2009, with the resulting decrease in grants and municipalities’ resources, interest education was significantly reduced or completely stopped in most rural schools.

According to the statistical data of the Ministry of Education and Science, at the beginning of the 2013/2014 academic year, 294 comprehensive and special daily educational establishments where the number

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¹¹ M. Whalley, *Developing support to parents through early childhood services*, Presentation in Eurofound Workshop, Brussels 2009.

of students was no more than a hundred opened their doors in Latvia. 87% of these schools are located in rural areas – parishes or parish administrative centres. This group of 255 small rural schools, the common features of which are the small number of students (no more than 100) and location in rural areas, are the subject of this evaluation. Most of these schools are elementary schools, with pupils studying in grades 1 to 9 (aged 7 to 15); there are schools among these where pre-school education groups are also open (pre-school education for 5 to 6 years old children is compulsory in Latvia, preparing them for the further education level). In the last six years the number of schools in Latvia has decreased; the most schools were closed in 2009 when the country was affected by a severe economic crisis. In 2008 there were 316 small rural schools (with up to 100 students in each), whereas in 2013 only 250 schools remained. 80 schools are very small, with the number of schoolchildren in them not exceeding 49.

In a situation where the population is continuing to decrease, especially in rural areas, and shrinkage processes of rural areas can be observed, one of the educational policy agenda issues is the arrangement of the school system. On the one hand, this means that due to falling student numbers and high costs of operating schools (education funding constitutes the major proportion of rural municipalities' and small towns' budgets) more of Latvia's small rural schools may be at a risk of closure. On the other hand, both education and regional development policy makers are considering possibilities to maintain these schools by expanding their functions and transforming them into One-stop agencies (Regional policy guidelines), offering a range of various educational, culture, social and employment promotion services. By 2020, the plan is to grant EU funding to 268 schools (with no more than 180 students) in order to establish multi-functional centres in these schools (Educational development guidelines). The SFL initiative "Change opportunities for schools", in which the schools have been transforming into community schools, in essence multi-functional community resource centres, can be deemed a pilot project for this policy.

Methodology

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The SFL initiative evaluation was carried out in two stages – in 2010 and in 2013.¹² Both quantitative and qualitative data acquisition and analysis methods were used to cover a wide range of target groups from school management, teachers, and representatives of local governments, to local inhabitants and education and rural development experts. The diversity of methods and target groups has allowed a variety of views on community school development processes in Latvia to be obtained and forms the basis for the reliability of the data.

At the first stage of the evaluation (in 2010), an electronic survey of school representatives was carried out, in which all the schools involved in the SFL initiative participated (N=52). 11 case studies were performed (in each case four in-depth interviews were conducted with school representatives, local inhabitants and local government representatives; the selection of cases was made based on several criteria – the location and type of the school, the social and economic profile of the community, the school activities beyond formal education and the target groups involved in these activities) and three focus group discussions with school representatives (N=16), as well as an additional five case studies, where answers to partially structured questionnaires were filled in by representatives from the schools and local government (N=10). During the second stage of the evaluation (in 2013), two electronic surveys were carried out, one of them involving representatives of the schools (N=41), the other representatives of local government (N=35), 38 in-depth on-site interviews were conducted with school management, teachers and school consultants, as well as four focus group discussions with school representatives (N=40). The findings and conclusions, summarized in this article, are based on integrated analyses of all the data.

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¹² Baltic Institute of Social Sciences [BISS], *Pētījums: Sorosa fonda – Latvija iniciatīvas „Pārmaiņu iespēja skolām” ietekmes novērtējums*, Rīga: SFL, 2011. Retrieved from: <http://www.sfl.lv/upload_file/2011%20gads/Parmainu_skolas_ietekmes_novertejums.pdf>, (08.12.2013). BISS, *Pētījums: Sorosa fonda – Latvija iniciatīvas „Pārmaiņu iespēja skolām” 2. kārtas „Skola kā kopienas attīstības resurs” novērtējums*, Rīga: SFL, 2013 [unpublished research study report]. Aija Tūna is the director and consultant of the Soros Foundation – Latvia (SFL) initiative „Change Opportunities for Schools” since the year 2009; Evija Kļave as the senior researcher at the Baltic Institute of Social Sciences (BISS) is the team leading researcher of evaluation study held in 2010 and 2013. Both authors of this paper have taken part in the elaboration of the methodology, the data collection and analysis at different stages of the evaluation study.

Description of a community school

When becoming involved in the initiative “Change Opportunities for Schools”, the aim of which was to promote school transformation into multi-functional centres, small rural schools developed the functions and services they offer by implementing various activities for schoolchildren and other groups from local society, such as pre-school children, young people, economically active people, senior citizens, the unemployed, groups of people at risk of social exclusion, large families, etc. The idea of a *community school* developed gradually as schools started to understand the needs of local people better, became more active in addressing different audiences in the community and with the support of consultants started to reflect and connect new activities with the new role of the school as an innovation with significant potential, not only a necessity caused by scarce financial circumstances.

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The target group analyses revealed that a significant feature of a developing community school is expanding its activities and strengthening inter-generational links, developing the social and communicative skills of community members, building community collective awareness, thus reducing social exclusion and distancing, and providing a framework for local inhabitants’ ability to influence their social and economic situation and improve their life quality.

The main groups of activities implemented by schools were the following: interest education for schoolchildren and children, lifelong learning for adults with the aim of acquiring knowledge and skills to promote employment (for example, computer classes, language studies, vocational and motivational programs), free time activities for adults (for example, needlework, crafts, culinary classes, and other leisure and hobbies-oriented classes), support for families with children (for example, lessons for young children, babysitting, parents’ schools or clubs), culture and social events (for example, concerts, celebrations, joint work organization) and social assistance services (for example, a possibility to use a washing machine or showers, as there are households in the country with no possibility to do so). Based on these activities, school functions have been developed to meet local people’s needs, the efficient implementation of which is possible first using the school and then the whole community’s technical and human resources.

Following the results of the assessment study, the basic features characterizing a developing community school in Latvia were defined:

- Maintaining formal education as a basic function of a school, which in practice means continuing a school's activities regardless of the number of students in it;
- A wide range of target groups involved in school activities, covering all groups of the population;
- Extended educational, social, cultural, etc. functions of a school, with an emphasis on interest education for all age groups (from pre-school to senior citizens), life-long learning, leisure and personality development activities;
- Extended access to school resources (human and technical resources) and their use for the needs of the local community;
- School as a civil society development centre, where conditions and possibilities for active cooperation on various levels are provided: inner networking within the community, the school and local inhabitants, the school and NGOs, the school and other municipality administration institutions;
- School as a support to local government performing a coordinating function between local government and other institutions in the parish (culture centre, library, social support providers).

The role of cooperation in community school activities

During the implementation of the initiative, it became clear that while expanding its functions and becoming a multi-functional local community centre (community school), the school has to develop or improve its cooperation and partnerships with other local stakeholders – culture centres, libraries, local NGOs, parish administration, regional governments, entrepreneurs, local farms, etc. Cooperation is a pre-condition for merging resources and utilising them efficiently to recognize and solve common problems, as well as improve the overall quality of life. As can be seen from the questionnaires and interviews with school project representatives, schools have developed better cooperation with local grass-roots organizations, local culture centres and libraries.

At the same time, this research has shown that the quality of cooperation is not even; there are communities where very coordinated and successful partnerships have developed, while there are other communities where cooperation is hindered by mutual competition. In order to develop efficient cooperation, a common understanding of the new role of a community school, as well as its operating principles and objectives, is critical to all parties involved. Otherwise, there is a risk that the institutions mentioned above may perceive schools as competitors in the redistribution of functions and subsequent reallocation of potential funding, for example, if the school takes on the role of organizing the culture life in the village or takes over the functions of a parish library, it may mean job losses among a culture centre staff or library directors. The understanding of the nature a community school and what its contribution to the community in general can be is formed gradually, when local inhabitants who represent various stakeholders get involved in activities organized by schools and in planning them, as well as by cooperating constructively with local government and its institutions. These cooperation links are mostly based on inhabitants' social and professional networks, whether they be representatives of various institutions and organizations, and individuals. A school is best placed to assume the coordinating role for these inter-institutional networks, but any of the participants in this network can become the coordinator. This role can be taken on either by parish administration, a library or local culture centre. The crucial point is shared understanding of the goals of a community school and reaching agreement on the most efficient way to achieve these goals.

Special attention has to be paid to cooperation between the school and municipality (we must remember that public schools are also municipal institutions; the municipality is the founder of a school and covers all the maintenance expenses of the school). In mutual cooperation between the school and municipality it is important for the school, i.e. both the administration and teachers, to recognize and appreciate that the municipal economic support (maintenance of the premises, aligning the budget among regional schools, etc.) is support for the continuation and further development of school activities. The comments made during in-depth interviews and focus group discussions showed that in some cases representatives of schools perceive this support as obvious. However, in

those cases where the school appreciates these municipal actions, it forms the basis for developing and maintaining positive mutual relationships which, in turn, are further developed into more exact forms of cooperation to identify and solve the local community problems. As a result of the first stage of the research, we came to the conclusion that there are three typical models of cooperation. Firstly, active and bilateral cooperation between the school and municipality; secondly, cooperation is rather passive on the municipality side, and basically the school takes the initiative; thirdly, the cooperation is only on the administrative level and is very formal with regard to the content. The second stage of the research showed that the quality of cooperation between schools and local governments in most cases has improved and both the school, with their initiative and activity, and the local government, going deeper into and understanding the community school model and its possibilities, have contributed to this result. Although the municipal position on maintaining the schools involved in the initiative is positive (municipalities are ready to support the school and to find the necessary funding), they still emphasize that the school has to show the initiative and demonstrate a willingness and an ability to work innovatively and to develop; at the same time, conflicting relationships have also been reported. In most such cases the reason for disagreement is limited municipality funding, as a result of which the school and the municipality are not always able to agree who has to take financial responsibility for the extended functions of the school. The school position is that they are municipal institutions, and by offering additional services, fulfill municipal functions. Thus the municipality has to provide funding. The municipality, in turn, considers that expanding its functions is the school's choice so the school has to take responsibility for its choices, including financial responsibility. This discrepancy is based on the lack of understanding of the fact that when taking on extra functions, the school has the right to manage not only the part of municipality budget meant for education. This kind of interdisciplinary cooperation has not been developed on the state administration level or in regulations.

According to local governments, state policy is not targeted at supporting schools as multi-functional centres, and that is a significant problem. It is different with regard to policy planning on the local administration level. The extended school functions enter the municipal development program

wholly or partially. In the opinion of the local government leaders and employees interviewed transforming schools into multi-functional centres is the only possibility to maintain small schools within the municipalities as student numbers in these schools are continuing to decrease. However, schools have resources of multiple use: there are premises, computers, various tools (wood and metal workshops, cooking and sewing equipment etc.) and sports equipment, as well as professional and enthusiastic teachers, who cannot work full-time as teachers because of the small number of pupils.

The role of a community school in promoting civic engagement

The experience gained by the schools involved in the initiative has affirmed that community schools in Latvia cannot be a universal 'one fits all', but rather an open and flexible model for small rural schools, which consists of changeable elements depending on the internal resources of a particular school, local context, municipality infrastructure, needs and interests of the community. The schools have become a valuable resource for local communities in various senses, both from the viewpoint of schools themselves and communities. Not only do schools see their contribution to building and improving local people's competencies, but are also aware of their possibilities to get involved in identifying and solving wider problems within local communities. Looking at a school as a community resource, local governments have confirmed that as a result of activities implemented by schools, both the participation of local people in various processes and their self-confidence has increased. Consequently, a more positive atmosphere prevails in the community and social relationships between local people are improving.

One of the components of the initiative was aimed at promoting local inhabitants' civic participation skills and involvement in the development of the community, raising awareness of the partnership as relations between individuals or groups which are characterized by mutual cooperation and responsibility in achieving common aims. As shown by the data, seminars, discussions, joint work and other cooperation forms can help develop many aspects: shared responsibility, mutual decision-making process, the recognition of certain roles and responsibilities, mutual respect,

an understanding of the rights to information and knowledge about the ways to obtain information. Ultimately, there is greater confidence that each community member has something to give the others and to invest in achieving common goals.

During the implementation of the initiative, cooperation between schools and local grassroots organizations increased considerably, with both parties benefitting from this. Local societies can use the school premises and the school/schoolchildren as a communication channel for disseminating information on their activities, as well as a source of information on local community needs and interests, while communities can help the school to attract and manage extra funding by writing project applications to various funders, can provide their knowledge and experts who can organize classes both in direct learning processes and also extra-curricular and interest education.

Schools have gained new experience in organizing community forums (such as a town hall meetings, coffee with decision-makers and other formats), which significantly contribute to better communication and mutual understanding between the school and local people. With the help of schools, civic participation activities have brought together people from different generations, thus enhancing mutual understanding, respect and social harmony. According to the information obtained, in most cases schools consider there to be greater public awareness on what the school does, and consequently, more support for the further existence of the school.

The impact of a community school model on formal education

The evaluation has also drawn attention to the impact of a community school on the formal education process, initially accepting that such a model can reduce some problems, such as drop-out risks and insufficient learning motivation among school children. The survey revealed that the problem of dropping out, which is connected with various social or economic risk factors in families, is less topical in small rural schools. This is due to the fact that they are relatively small communities, where social control is high, and in cases where families have difficulty providing their children with all the necessary supplies or paying for a school lunch, the

problem is solved by the school in close cooperation with local government. Moreover, research has shown that small schools become involved in solving the problem of drop-outs from urban schools by returning students to school and providing them with a second chance to continue their schooling and develop their personalities. With regard to changes in motivation to study, school representatives have noticed positive changes based on greater understanding between students and teachers.

Further research will be done in this respect, but two conclusions can already be identified from the in-depth interview data: firstly, by getting involved in lifelong learning activities, teachers see the need to apply a greater variety of teaching methods, which are then further used in the formal education process when teaching schoolchildren. Secondly, becoming involved in mutual educational, cultural, civic and other activities together with other members of communities, teachers get to know better schoolchildren's parents, and form a new kind of relationship with them and other family members, which in turn helps to develop more efficient cooperation to improve the learning process. In both cases, schoolchildren are the winners.

Teachers' involvement in implementing extended school functions is connected with their understanding of their work and also the risk of them being overloaded. Investigating the increase in teachers' workload in greater depth, we can conclude that the causes of this overload are not only the result of teachers' involvement into community school activities, as before the initiative many teachers had also been working part-time due to the small number of students in schools. We have to look at a range of reasons, taking into consideration teachers' workload, participation in public life and non-work responsibilities, as well as the teacher's physical, psychological and emotional resources. Our research testifies that those teachers who get involved in extra activities are those who have always been active and are not afraid of acquiring new skills and taking new responsibilities. The next step which is closely connected with the sustainability of the results of the initiative is to involve all the teachers in extra activities more equally.

One of the most important positive aspects observed among teachers involved in the SFL initiative is the change in and consolidation of understanding educational goals, emphasizing that the school has to provide school children with skills and knowledge, and develop attitudes which

they will need in their everyday life, as well as create possibilities to apply their knowledge, skills and attitudes both at school and in the local community. Involvement in organizing various activities allows teachers to develop and express their creativity when working with schoolchildren. Participating in project activities has given teachers possibilities to learn new teaching methods, which can be successfully implemented in the formal education process as well. Furthermore, some teachers say that they now perform their work duties with confidence that learning can be different, and not only in classrooms or during lessons.

The sustainability of the community school

In the first stage of the evaluation, the expected sustainability of the schools involved in the initiative and its risks were analyzed. Four groups of sustainability indicators were defined, which allowed the school's social, financial, political and institutional sustainability to be evaluated. School and local government surveys, in addition to the results of focus group discussions, made it possible to arrive at the main conclusions on each aspect of sustainability in the newly emerged community schools. The social sustainability of a school is ensured by high demand for the formal and informal educational services offered by the school, activities that promote employment and provide social support to various groups of local people. Furthermore, schools have the necessary human resources to take on these functions. The institutional sustainability of the schools involved in the initiative can be assessed relatively positively; the schools have improved their technical resources in the short and long term, and are thus able to offer various services to local people and create an environment conducive to knowledge acquisition and creativity. In general, the school and local government support the new model of schools with extended functions. However, there is still the risk of the school being closed as an educational establishment providing formal education due to ever-decreasing student numbers, as this is the main if not the only indicator for allocating funds to teachers' salaries. The results of political sustainability analyses, on the one hand, show that small schools operating as multi-functional community centres have started to be included in municipal policy-planning documents. This

school model has also started to gain understanding and support on the national policy-planning level. Political support is still insufficient and vaguely defined, as it is not followed by the funding necessary for implementation of such a policy.

Consequently, the biggest risks are connected with the financial sustainability of a school as a community school. This was proved at the second stage of the evaluation, when technical, finance and human resources were analyzed in the interim period between two stages of the initiative and when external funding was not provided. The main sponsor for extended school functions is the local government; funding is granted for school premises and their maintenance, partially for remuneration of school staff (teachers are mostly paid from the state grants), as well as a proportion of expenses paid for materials necessary for interest education and leisure activities organized by the school. Although local governments spend a significant proportion of their budget on the needs of educational establishments, the total resources of the municipalities prevent guarantees to support the new school model to an extent which could ensure their real sustainability in a full range of activities. There is also a lack of understanding that funding offered to a school can derive not only from a specially allocated education budget, but also from other lines of financing, as schools also offer cultural, social and other services. The possibilities of the school itself attracting funding to provide continuity in ongoing activities are limited due to several circumstances, including school capacity and the sources of financing available to them. Many schools are already aware of the techniques of attracting financial resources, but the funds gained from participants' payments, other projects, and the sales of their own output do not cover the costs related to the activities of a multi-functional centre. Voluntary work does not always compensate for a lack of financing either.

The solution could be found in changing the funding model for small rural schools as community schools – multi-functional community centres. The small school policy should be cross-sectoral in the way it is drawn up and implemented. Different ministries are involved in providing financial support for this (the Ministry of Education and Science, the Ministries of Welfare, Health and the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development). State funding should be supplemented by support from local governments, NGOs and private sectors.

Conclusions

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The study revealed that the following aspects have been at the basis of strategy to diversify the functions of small schools in Latvia to become a multifunctional community centre /community school. First, maximum use of existing resources, especially human resources; secondly, understanding of the local community's educational, cultural and social needs and initialization of the relevant intervention; thirdly, creating a cooperation network between the school, parents and local community, where parents are often the intermediary between the school and local people; fourthly, promoting systemic and strategic thinking of the role of a school in the local community, the possibilities and potential of a school.

Based on the results of the initiative, we can confirm that community school development in Latvia is a social and educational innovation with high potential, although insufficient current political and financial support determines the sustainability risks of the model. The schools involved in the SFL initiative can be considered one of the small rural schools policy pilot sites and further policy development should be based on experience gained and results achieved. The current activities of schools in developing into multifunctional community centres /community schools in Latvia form the basis of the following conclusions.

Despite the differences between small rural schools, the different social contexts they work in, the different resources of all kinds and different local community needs, all the schools are potential platforms for the empowerment of local communities' (including school children) abilities, possibilities and choices in a rural environment, thus promoting the development of these areas and improving the quality of life in the country. The community school makes a significant contribution to community capacity-building, the efficient use of its resources, expanding the scope of its activities and developing local cooperation and partnership networks.

The initiative to become a community school (the motivation to change the typical model of school operation) has to come from schools themselves and should be supported by local communities in accordance with the *bottom-up* model of policy making and implementation. The need for a school and readiness to take responsibility for its future on the part of the school and rural community themselves is important, showing in action how a small school, regardless of whether the functions of formal

education are stopped or maintained, can influence life in the local community and the quality of life.

To consolidate and proliferate the community school model in the rural area, the support of local governments and the state is equally important for such schools. This support includes a shared understanding of what a community school is and what its contribution to the overall development of the locality and state is at present and can be. The development of coordinated interdisciplinary policies, assuming mutually shared financial responsibility for the functioning of community schools, is a necessary condition for dissemination and sustainability of the results is needed.

To conclude, it has to be emphasized that a school as a multi-functional centre in Latvia, just like in other countries, is not a poverty-defined ad hoc decision; it is a contemporary solution based on a holistic approach solution, and a learning and lifestyle model which allows the needs of individuals and the entire civil society to be addressed, making efficient use of existing and attracting new resources. The decision on whether to maintain or close a school and choose an operating model for it has to be made on site and by all the stakeholders (not “from above” and centrally), taking into consideration the community viewpoint, as well as being aware of all the consequences and responsibilities of this decision. The development of schools must be considered together with spatial development; and it is important to do so with a view to the future, not based on past models.

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