

EDUCATION AND UNEMPLOYMENT IN A GLOBALIZED ECONOMY IN THE PHASE OF DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGE

Ryszard MARSZOWSKI

Główny Instytut Górnictwa, Katowice; rmarszowski@gig.eu, ORCID 0000-0002-2855-7121

Abstract: In the paper, we present theoretical considerations on the impact of education and knowledge on minimizing unemployment effects in a globalized economy, in the phase of demographic change and in the face of enhanced competitiveness of labor resources and social and professional activation. On the basis of these considerations, particular importance was attributed to human and social capital. In this context, the article notes that education not only shapes and develops knowledge and skills, but also builds social capital. This in turn, shapes the potential of human capital through applying the right model of education. Thus, education becomes the imperative of modernity.

Keywords: human capital, social capital, education, unemployment.

1. Introduction

In the dynamically developing globalized economy, in the phase of demographic change, significant processes occur on the demand and supply side of the labor market. The mismatch between supply and demand for the workforce is a structural mismatch that may be of a qualitative, branch or industry character, and is related to the level of vocational and spatial education. The already mentioned demographic change is equally important in the process of shaping the relationship between labor supply and demand for labor. The result will be a systematic decline in the supply of labor and, above all, an increase in the demographic load factor. According to forecasts, by 2060, the demographic burden will increase significantly (in relation to the base year, i.e. 2014, it may be an increase even more than double). In turn, the aging factor of older people may increase more than three times – as the forecasts indicate (Kielkowska, 2013, p. 6). The indicated processes will have a huge impact on the quantitative and qualitative dimension of unemployment, which is also determined by changes in the structure of consumer demand or, for example, the collapse or development of economies.

This, along with the emergence of more and more innovative technologies could be broadly called 'Revolution 4.0'.

The phenomenon of unemployment is the source of numerous undesirable economic effects on a macro scale (reduction of gross domestic product or state budget, increase in public expenditure), and micro scale (decline in quality of life of unemployed people and their family members, threats resulting from the deprivation of social groups affected by unemployment). The indicated negative effects are accompanied by numerous social problems (marginalization of households and social exclusion leading to dissatisfaction and feeling unfit, which unequivocally results in deterioration of the health and physical situation of the unemployed person and that individual's entry into the field of social pathologies (alcoholism, drug addiction, crime) (Worach-Kardas, 2011, pp. 403-411). In this context, it is necessary to skillfully identify development trends regarding employment and directions of changes taking place on the labor market. Currently, transformations in both the social and structural dimensions on a global scale significantly shape social policy. It is worth emphasizing that the situation on the labor market is one of the most significant factors shaping the standard of living of modern man in a globalized economy, in the phase of demographic change (Matusiak, et al. 2009, p. 11 8).

2. Unemployment – causes, consequences, legal solutions

The beginning of the nineties of the last century determined above all by the changed political landscape of Poland revealed a previously unknown social phenomenon – unemployment¹. This is a very complex phenomenon, with various and characteristic factors that cause and shape it. In describing this phenomenon, the following key sources of unemployment are distinguished (Kwiatkowski, 2019):

- stratification of the structure of labor demand and supply,
- restructuring of the economy, often associated with a reduction in the number of business entities,
- decline or disappearance of production or services determined by the lack of demand,
- ineffective forms of professional activation on the part of the institution of the labor market,
- mismatch between education and employment needs,
- high tax burden on entrepreneurs,
- low professional and educational mobility of the employed and the unemployed,

¹ A partial description of the causes, effects and solutions was taken from the doctoral dissertation manuscript of the author of the article entitled "Professional activation of people aged 50 and more in the phase of demographic change in the labor market of the Śląskie Voivodeship". Unpublished material.

- decreasing number of business entities or institutions as a result of their transfer to other more attractive markets,
- increasing the importance of new technologies and innovative solutions that are repeatedly a factor eliminating a definite percentage of employees from the labor market,
- spatial diversification of economic development,
- decreasing number of micro enterprises, so-called family enterprises,
- passive investment policy of business entities resulting in the disappearance of their development,
- low level of financing public employment services,
- union organization policy aiming at increasing wages above the level of economic possibilities of enterprises.

As Olak observes, currently unemployment is a very serious threat that can result in irreversible, severe effects affecting both individuals and social groups (Olak, 2014, pp. 141-155). The effects of unemployment can be anticipated in two dimensions: social and economic. The area of the social consequences of unemployment is first and foremost viewable through the eyes of persons who cannot find employment or lose their jobs. In a wider dimension, it will be a local community. These are often effects that appear in the long-term, for example, related to both physical and mental health (Kostrzewski, et al. 2008, pp. 504-510). They can also determine a number of long-term treatment costs that involve specific professional environments and institutions.

Unemployment associated with professional deactivation has destructive aftershock – not only on the individual, but also on that individual's family. This is mainly related with the loss of the authority of a person who was fully involved in shaping the life of the family. As a result of this state, there may be inclusions in the dimension of family, friends and acquaintances. The two most extreme and described effects of the phenomenon of unemployment are suicide and the entry of the unemployed into conflict with the law (Kosiba, et al., 2017, pp. 83-11).

In turn, the economic effects associated with the financial insecurity of the unemployed individual and that individual's family evoke feelings of insecurity and introversion. Indeed, being unemployed for over 24 months often leads to poverty and social exclusion. The condition described in an extremely radical way affects the state of interpersonal relationships in the family of a person affected by unemployment and may cause numerous tensions and misunderstandings (Migala, 2011, pp. 89-141).

It is also worth noting that the economic and social effects of unemployment can be readily perceived in the individual dimension, i.e. in being unemployed, and in the general social dimension (Potasińska, 2015, pp. 73-84). The unitary costs of unemployment are, however, focused on the unemployed person and his family. These can be divided into three types, i.e. costs associated with a lack of income, and those of a psychosocial and health nature.

Particularly dangerous, as previously noted, are the effects of unemployment that evoke serious family discord. The literature indicates that addressing following can negate change damage (Matejak and others 2015, pp. 97-107):

- care and education, associated with a weakening of material stability and a sense of security,
- socialization, associated with lack of self-esteem,
- emotional-expressive, focusing on the disappearance of the parents' authority and the spiteful conflict of the spouses on the level of financial deficits,
- cultural – radical limitations of expenses related to the area of meeting cultural needs.

On the other hand, in the general social dimension, the negative effects of unemployment are focused on groups representing a particular profession, on local communities and on the national economy. Determinants of the division shaped in this way are the changing relations between employers and the employed and competition within the labor market, as well as the impoverishment of groups related to the local community as a result of unemployment. This fact often results in an urgent need to reform local policies and increase expenditures securing the needs of members of these communities (Śmilgin, 2008, p. 432).

The described effects of unemployment, both social and economic, clearly determine the size of public expenditure that must be drawn from the state budget, which is directly proportional to their scale. In this context, it is worth noting the correlation between an unemployment rate greater than the natural phenomenon and the increase in expenses on counteracting it causing a clear reduction of the Gross Domestic Product. The loss of part of GDP resulting from the costs related to counteracting unemployment is measured by the so-called the GDP gap, which is calculated as the difference between the potential GDP, i.e. that occurs in conditions of full employment, and the actual GDP, i.e. actually achieved at a given time.

The American economist, Artur Okun, described this phenomenon, now deemed ‘the law of Okuna’. In this law, it is stated that for each percentage of increase in the unemployment rate above the natural GDP gap, this gap increases by 2.5% (Kliber, 2017, pp. 41-57). Thus, unemployment is a huge cost, both social and economic, resulting in a significant reduction in GDP.

In the context of public expenditure on counteracting unemployment, it is worth noting that in the administrative reform of the country after 1989, the implementation of the main objectives related to counteracting unemployment has moved to the level of the commune. The basic legal act regarding professional activation in Poland is the Act of 20 April 2004 on the promotion of employment and labor market institutions (hereinafter – pzirp) (Journal of Laws, 2004).

The Act sets out a catalog of public administration activities in the field of promoting employment and minimizing the effects of unemployment and loss of professional activation. Activities associated with the indicated areas are assigned to labor market institutions and are aimed at achieving:

- full and productive employment,
- full human resources development,
- offers of high quality work,
- strengthening of integration and social solidarity,
- increasing mobility on the labor market.

Pursuant to the provisions of the Act, labor market services are implemented by specialized labor market institutions that, for this purpose, use the following support instruments:

- activation supplements,
- reimbursement of costs of equipping or retrofitting the job position for an unemployed entity conducting business activity,
- financing the costs of organized travel of the unemployed and jobseekers, in connection with the participation of these people in job fairs and job fairs organized by the voivodship labor office as part of job placement,
- intervention works,
- socially useful works,
- granting the unemployed or graduate funds for starting a business activity, for establishing or joining a social cooperative,
- public works,
- internship
- professional preparation of adults,
- childcare costs reimbursement,
- scholarships while continuing education,
- travel and accommodation costs reimbursement.

In connection with the deepening unfavorable situation associated with high unemployment, in Poland, in the first decade and the beginning of the second decade of the 21st century, actions were taken to update the adopted solutions aimed at limiting the negative effects resulting from unemployment². Despite these actions, the situation on the labor market did not improve. This was the key reason for introducing further solutions and new instruments into labor market policy in 2014. The amended Public Procurement Law has designated public employment services to achieve new goals (Journal of Laws of March, 14). These include:

² For example, the unemployment rate in Poland increased in February 2013 to 14.4 percent, or 0.2 percentage point, in monthly terms and 1 percentage point, on an annual basis. It was the highest level of unemployment in Poland since March 2007. Source: own calculations based on the local data bank. CSO, Labor market, registered unemployment rate in 2007-2013.

- Increasing the efficiency of activities carried out by labor offices.
- Improving the quality of job services and adjusting these to the real needs of unemployed people.
- Providing support for employers taking up employment of people who re-enter the labor market after a break related to the period of parental leave or care for a dependent person.
- Offering support for employers taking up unemployed persons between 30 and 50 years of age.
- Supporting employers undertaking programs that develop the professional qualifications of employees.
- Strengthening the economic activation of the unemployed as a result of granting low-interest loans to create jobs or to develop their own business.
- Strengthening the economic activation of the unemployed, in particular, the elderly unemployed, by launching a program of activation and social integration of the unemployed (hereinafter – PAI).
- Strengthening the professional activation of the unemployed by enabling the outsourcing of tasks in this field to external entities.

The implementation of these tasks is expected to bring about, first and foremost, an increase in employment, and an improvement of matching the professional qualifications of this group to the actual demand in the economy and strengthening public employment services as part of their cooperation with employers and non-public entities (Głąbicka, 2014, pp. 73-108).

Taking into account the need to increase the efficiency of activities carried out by labor offices, the algorithm was changed by means of which the amount of the Labor Fund resources directed to the promotion of employment, and to alleviating the effects of unemployment and professional activation is determined. The amount of these funds is now dependent on the effectiveness of activities activating the unemployed professionally undertaken by a specific employment office. In particular, the amount of funds for financing programs depends on the registered number of the unemployed and the unemployment rate – to 75% and the effectiveness of actions for the activation of the unemployed – to 25%. The Pzinp Act also indicates solutions aimed at increasing the role of social partners in developing plans related to the implementation of Labor Fund expenditure, including for the professional activation of older people.

Increasing this role is accomplished through the actions of the Labor Market Council (hereinafter – RRP). RRP are created at the national, provincial and poviast level, as consultative and advisory bodies. At the national level, RRP is the consultative and advisory body to the minister competent for labor issues in the matters of labor market policy and the authority which determines the priorities for spending funds from the National Training Fund reserve. In the voivodship and poviast, RRP are consultative and advisory bodies of the voivodship marshal and staroste in matters of labor market policy.

The Pzirc Act, defining the role of voivodship and local self-government in creating labor market policy, indicates that support in improving the quality of employment services and their adaptation to real needs of unemployed people is realized as a result of the definition of tasks carried out by Information Centers and Vocational Career Planning of Voivodship Offices Work (Lex for local government, 2018). Within the voivodship labor office, there is at least one Information and Career Planning Center. This is a specialized organizational unit, which in particular supports poviats labor offices in conducting vocational guidance by providing specialized services in the field of career planning for the unemployed and jobseekers in this field by providing distance guidance services using teleinformatic systems, and developing, updating and disseminating professional information, in particular, in poviats labor offices in the voivodship.

At the local level, support in the area of improving the quality of office services and their adjustment to the real needs of unemployed people is implemented as part of an individual help profile. This support includes three profiles and forms of help:

- profile I based on job placement and vocational counseling,
- profile II based on labor market services and instruments, activation activities ordered by the labor office and other forms of assistance with the exception of PAI,
- profile III based on PAI, activation activities ordered by the employment office, special programs, referral to employment supported by the employer or starting work in a social cooperative set up by legal entities and in justified cases, career counseling.

An individual profile is built-up by the poviats labor office for every unemployed person immediately after registration, with particular emphasis on the dismissal of the unemployed person from the labor market and the level of readiness for that individual to return to the labor market.

An important activity is to support employers taking up the employment of unemployed people returning to the labor market after a break related to raising a child or caring for a dependent person. In this case, the support is a teleworking grant, directed to unemployed parents returning to the labor market and who are bringing up at least one child under the age of 6, and to the unemployed taking care of a dependent person who in the last 3 years has had to resign from employment or other gainful activity due to the need to look after a child or a dependent person.

Employers taking up employment of unemployed people over 50 can obtain co-financing of remuneration for employing the unemployed in this age. Support for employers undertaking programs developing professional qualifications of staff is carried out as part of the Labor Fund resources. The disposition of these funds is the National Training Fund (hereinafter – KFS). The funds at the disposal of the KFS cannot be used for purposes other than for co-financing such activity at the request of the employer and after submitting to the poviats labor office, the costs of the training project. Poviats labor offices can allocate KFS funds to finance activities covering the continuing education of employees and employers, which include:

- defining the needs of the employer in the field of lifelong learning,
- post-graduate courses and studies implemented at the initiative of the employer or with his consent,
- exams enabling obtaining documents confirming the acquisition of skills, qualifications or professional qualifications,
- medical and psychological examinations required to take up education or work after completing education,
- insurance against accidents in connection with the education undertaken.

Strengthening the economic activation of the unemployed, with particular emphasis on the unemployed aged 50 and above, is accomplished through the PAI program. This program is aimed at the professional activation and social integration of unemployed who are clients of social assistance centers, and who on the basis of individual assistance profiles, are people far removed from the labor market or who show a lack of readiness to take up a job. It is important to emphasize that this instrument of professional activation is of an optional nature, and its execution depends on the financial possibilities possessed by the municipality. The cooperating units within the scope of the PAI program are poviats labor offices, social assistance centers and entities conducting statutory activities for the integration and reintegration of professionals and social persons at risk of social exclusion. The PAI program is activated for two months duration.

Another activity supporting the vocational activation of older people is the possibility to outsource tasks in this field to external entities. As a result of this solution, an external entity may undertake professional activation of long-term unemployed persons and those covered by the PAI program. The vocational activation program is financed from the Labor Fund, which, according to the Act, is overseen by the marshal of the voivodship by way of public procurement.

Apart from the Pzirc Act, there are other regulations addressed to people who are in a particularly difficult situation on the labor market. These regulations are: the Act of June 13, 2003 on social employment (Journal of Laws, 2006), the Act of April 27, 2006 on Social Cooperatives (Journal of Laws, 2006), the Act of 24 April 2003 on Public Benefit and Volunteer Work (Journal of Laws of 2003), Act of 12 March 2004 on social assistance (Journal of Laws, 2004), Act of 27 August 2007 on the employment of disabled persons (Journal of Laws, 1997).

As already noted in accordance with the Act, the key forms associated with the method of minimizing unemployment include: intervention, special programs, subsidizing employment and graduate internships, as well as trainings for the unemployed and employees at risk of losing their job. In limiting unemployment, education holds a special role, as this is an extremely effective form of professional activation. In this context, unused labor resources remain a key challenge for Poland's social policy and labor market. The problem addressed focuses mainly on social groups that are most at risk of social inclusion, long-term unemployment and poverty. These are, in particular, the elderly, the disabled and women living in rural areas.

In response to the abovementioned problem areas and challenges related to the phenomenon of unemployment, it is worth noting that in the area of education, Poland has achieved the level of participation of young people not in education to be lower than 10% and the percentage of people with higher education in the population aged 30-34 to be more than 40% (Strategy for..., 2017, p. 266).

3. Education and knowledge versus globalization and competitiveness

The end of the twentieth century introduced a new term, previously unknown, i.e. a knowledge-based economy. Currently, it is assumed that knowledge (Tusińska, 2014) is the decisive factor for competitive advantages in a globalized economy. In previous periods, this factor was work, capital and land. Accordingly, economic development is correlated with the appropriate use of knowledge (Mańkiewicz, 2016, pp. 130-140). This condition determines the decline in the influence of such factors as capital and labor resources in the areas of productivity, competitiveness and efficiency on increasing the impact on the above-mentioned areas of knowledge in the field of technical sciences, economics, organization and management. As the literature shows, relationships formed in this way enable the growth of competitiveness of economies, which are additionally determined by the following key factors: innovative technologies and products, as well as efficient management. Hence, the dynamics of changes taking place in globalized economies is conditioned by the resources and modernity of people's knowledge, quality of work, education and training, and ability to think innovatively and to put in place new solutions to production, distribution and services (Kolodko, 2010).

In this light, as indicated by numerous studies and documents defining the strategic directions of development of national, regional and global economies, investment in science and education is becoming more important (Soszyńska, 2008, pp. 134-165). As confirmed by the practice, such investments are the most profitable form of supporting the modernity and competitiveness of economies, as a result of economic growth. The role that education fulfills is clearly to be noted as the most effective determinant shaping the development of human capital, which is particularly emphasized in the theory of economics³. Education and related investment in own development imply an increase in income, and serves as the basis for building life quality and level of wealth and household function. Based on empirical research, it has been shown that the level and quality of education of family members in a statistical household clearly influences the differences in the level of income achieved in it. The indicated

³ Human capital is a resource of knowledge and skills that a person acquires through participating in the education process and during work. It is also a health resource. Human capital is integrated with the human unit, the knowledge that individual has, his/her skills and abilities. See. I. Popiel, Conceptual Aspects of Human Capital and its Significance, *Legal and Economic Studies*, vol. XCV, 2015, p. 302.

factor also significantly differentiates the income of households due to their place of residence (urban-rural areas) (Kasprzyk, et al., 2011, pp. 261-272).

In this context, through the prism of investing in the development of human resources, it should be noted once again that the globalization process, internationalization and knowledge-based economy are fully correlated with the level of human knowledge; and to a lesser extent, with material, natural resources and workforce. The domination of human capital results in it having influence upon all other human-related factors and its recognition as a key factor in global development. Numerous literature sources emphasize that without the participation of investments in human capital, economic development is impossible to achieve (Gołaszewska-Kaczan, 2014, pp. 91-104).

It is this capital that will determine the condition of the national economies of the European Union and the distance in their development. Therefore, it is assumed that the necessary condition for the development of economies is the permanent strengthening of human capital, along with the recognition of this action as the imperative of modernity (Becla, et al., 2014, pp. 16-28). Along with the indicated economic benefits resulting from investing in the development of human capital, the quality of life, its level and numerous social benefits, a decrease in crime is seen, social ties are strengthened, increased tolerance behaviors are noticed, and increased environmental awareness comes about, as does activity to protect the natural environment.

The educational system plays a very positive role in these areas, on the basis of which the development of human capital influences the shape of social rules and norms and determines social cohesion. As a result, actions taken in the economic sphere create an advantage for the general public and a more just division of it. These are activities that create favorable conditions for increasing the possibilities of using and creating resources and increasing the already mentioned investments in human capital.

In this light, education not only focuses on transferring knowledge and shaping skills, but also in creating immeasurably valuable social capital for the knowledge economy⁴. As indicated by numerous sources, if social capital disappears, that society is threatened with disintegration. This is evident in many countries (Poganowska, 2004, pp. 15-16). Secondly, it is recognized that social capital is a very important factor, the quality of which is the achievement of social and economic goals. The more developed the social capital, the greater the chance of being successful in the actions taken. As Fukuyama observes, the pro-developmental impact of social capital occurs in the conditions of relationships shaped on the basis of the principle of respect for common good based on norms and values resulting from the culture of a given society, such as loyalty, honesty and integrity (Przymeński, 2004,

⁴ Social capital is the ability to spread trust within a society or a part of it. This capital can be a feature of the smallest and most basic social group, which is the family. It can also be considered on the scale of the whole nation or within all intermediate groups. Social capital differs from other forms of human capital in that it is created and transmitted through cultural mechanisms: religion, tradition, historical habit. F. Fukuyama: *Confidence: Social capital and the path to prosperity*. PWN, Warsaw 1997, p. 39.

p. 46). Education plays an extremely important role in this area, teaching ethical valuation and shaping the use of universal cultural norms, significantly reducing the costs of activities in the area of economy (e.g. forging attitudes of opposition to the destruction of available resources or increasing responsive responsibility for the work performed). At the same time, it affects the reduction of tensions in multicultural communities. As a result, it determines more dynamic and stable progress in the economic development of the country or region.

Social capital and related norms and trust form an important basis for shaping more positive human behaviors, minimizing or eliminating rent-seeking attitudes (Dabla-Norris, Wade, 2001, pp. 28) and reinforcing the predictability of socio-economic phenomena. This significantly improves the coordination of phenomena and processes, as well as ensuring a more efficient flow of resources, skills and information, while at the same time increasing the effectiveness of flows, determining a variety of specializations and popularizing investment in ideas, human and material capital (Poganowska, 2004, pp. 15-16).

The 21st century brought dynamic economic and social processes with a global dimension, which implies three fundamental changes: climate and technological and demographic. On their canvas, scenario forecasts for the development of societies are being built and economies in global, regional or national dimensions are being pushed forward (Palacios-Huerta, 2014, pp. 272). The process of globalization of the economy is particularly visible in these endeavors. According to Sporek, the processes associated with globalization, result in many benefits and create numerous new development opportunities, as well as the emergence of serious threats and new hitherto unknown challenges as a result of their impact.

In this context, it seems necessary to recognize the directions of development of processes determined by globalization and counteracting the dangers resulting from it. Therefore, states, regions and societies must step up to the plate because globalization also involves injustice and social stratification. Hence, the need to eliminate these negative effects of globalization must be underlined.

One of the key reasons for this state of affairs is the decreasing impact on the globalization processes of nation states and the clear lack of supranational organizations that may influence the course of phenomena caused by globalization. It seems that in this light it is necessary to undertake activities at the level of cooperation concluded in the form of large national and supranational structures in order to stimulate the course of globalization in the areas of need. This is directly connected with the necessity to look for solutions that enable cooperation in the direction of development of a globalized economy, as well as the building of appropriate institutional structures that can be monitored and supervised in a transparent manner and enable sustainable processes triggered by globalization in a given space.

Recognized rules for diagnosing the effects of globalization should be anchored in widely accepted legal regulations and international agreements. This applies, in particular, to areas related to financial markets (Sporek, 2014, p. 47). However, according to J.T. Hryniewicz, the most important determinants of economic growth are such factors as: social activity, level

of education and cultural imports. J.T. Hryniewicz has modeled solutions that show that socio-cultural conditions, including the already mentioned social activity, educational level and cultural imports, have more significant influence on economic development than does infrastructure, entrepreneurship and ownership (Hryniewicz, 2000, pp. 53-54). In the same way, Domański ascribes the important role of economic development to soft factors, such as learning to learn, culture, qualifications, innovation, social bonds and establishing a climate of trust (Domański, 2001, pp. 127-234).

Soft factors, which are inseparably attributed to a man, along with their development, are subject to further improvement. In this process, which has already been emphasized earlier, education plays an undeniable role. Hence, as Leg and Stawicka rightly note, with the economy based on knowledge, such terms as artistry, talent, tolerance and mutual understanding, dignity, originality, cordiality and respect have mutual interconnection with the development of technology. On this backdrop, American economist R. Florida notes that the industry-agriculture-service triad is insufficient to explain and describe real economic processes and take on the most accurate investment activities. To achieve the objectives indicated above, she points out the need to take into account the creative sector. Justifying this need, she emphasizes that quality of life and productivity are influenced by such forces as the ability to create new ideas and follow more efficient, modern ways of managing (Noga, et al., 2008, p. 127).

The same is true that knowledge, in the process of globalization and internationalization (Ruigrok, et al 2007, pp. 56-57; Hennart, 2007; Sullivan, 1994, pp. 67-69; Hsu, 2003, pp. 27; Contractor, 2007, pp. 48-49), becomes the key potential to animate the development of a knowledge-based society. As Skubiak notes, if today, in accordance with the new paradigm, achieving success depends on soft factors such as those related to power, elite activities and social activity, the achievement of success is related to education, and an understanding of how things work and interrelate (Kubiak, 2013, pp. 195-203).

4. Education, professional activity, demographic change⁵

As has been already noted, in Poland, the 21st century saw the dynamic process of an aging society (Demographic changes, 2013, p. 4). This demographic change comes with serious social and economic consequences related to regional, national or local depopulation (Kryński, 2010, pp. 29-48). This is clearly recognized and addressed in the Strategy for Responsible Development, which states that among many threats to the country's development, one of the most serious is the demographic change and the negative processes connected with it, including:

⁵ Partially, the demographic change was taken from the manuscript of the author's dissertation with the title "Professional activation of people aged 50 and more in the phase of demographic change in the labor market of the Śląskie Voivodeship". Unpublished material.

negative population growth, decreasing numbers of individuals of working age and a dynamic increase in the number of older people. As a result of these changes, a dynamic increase in the demographic load factor occurs. This may result in tax increase, reduction of investment outlays and, as a result, a slowdown in economic development. Moreover, the drop in the number of young people may additionally affect the weakening of the creativity of the society, and thus indirectly reduce the level of innovativeness of the national economy. As emphasized in the Strategy, the deficit of qualified cadres is already visible on the labor market. This is mainly the result of migration processes. Hence, there is an urgent need to develop a program for effective management of human capital flows. Equally important is the impact on unfavorable demographic processes through a suitably profiled pro-family and migration policy that may enable maintaining balance on the labor market. As emphasized in the Strategy, the activity related to shaping pro-family policy will be effective when it is forged through systemic and lasting solutions focusing on sound financing policy, institutional solutions and legal regulations relating to the possibility of creating an optimally broad spectrum of socio-economic life.

As a result of the demographic processes taking place and mainly the reversal of the age pyramid associated with them, it will be a serious challenge to maintain the previously mentioned balance within the labor market. Equally important next to the already signaled activities will be the necessity to sustain the economic activity of older people. This demographic challenge will force reforms in the economy to take advantage of the so-called silver economy by creating services and products that meet the needs of a society dominated by older people. The indicated process will also significantly determine the development of the small and medium enterprise sector, which in the vast majority already satisfies the needs and wants related to safety, professional activity, leisure, independence and self-sufficiency of older people (Strategy for..., 2017, pp. 12- 13).

Recognizing that education is one of the factors with the greatest efficiency in the process of vocational activation, in taking into account the threat of depopulation, special attention must be focused on this factor in the context of an older population, i.e. people after the age of 50. Referring again to the Strategy for Responsible Development, it should be understood that according to forecasts in the near future, Poland will have the largest population of people over 50 in the European Union. Indeed, according to the forecast, it can be expected that in 2020, 43% of Poles will be fifty. In turn, in 2050, 1/3 of the population living in Poland will exceed 65 years. This change will be accompanied by the already mentioned serious numerical decline of the youngest population. Herein it is forecasted that by 2035, in Poland, the population of children aged 0-2 will decrease by more than 30%, those 3-5 years – by 25%, and those 6-14 years – by about 16%. The indicated changes will have a significant impact on the national education system, forcing serious organizational changes. As the Strategy signals, among others, there will be an increase in costs related to the maintenance and professional activity of schools due to these being fixed, yet serving a smaller population of pupils and students.

In unfavorable demographic conditions and the resulting new challenges related to skills and competences expected in the labor market, the education system must embrace life-long learning and address the needs and wants of students of adult age, particularly in rural areas (Strategy for..., 2017, pp. 267-268).

The goals of achieving professional activation of older people in the labor market require systemic solutions. In today's Poland, tasks related directly to the professional activation of older people (50 years and more) are conducted by specialized services and institutions of the labor market, based on binding legal, institutional and financial regulations (Szaban, 2012, pp. 27-30). The difficult situation that this age group finds itself in requires appropriate actions at the national, provincial and municipal levels. Regardless of the size of the area where the labor market policy is implemented, the objectives of vocational activation include primarily:

- increasing the employment of people aged 50 and more,
- maintaining employment by people aged 50 plus,
- bringing unemployed people over 50 to re-employment,
- building a model that determines the maintenance and development of intellectual, social and professional activity of older people, which is their source and prevention of social exclusion.

The local community level holds importance in the professional activation of older people. These run practical activities that also develop the objectives of professional activation of older people that have been adopted in national documents. Such endeavors have been put into place by the European Union and topped up by state budget. Their main goal was to improve the situation on the labor market of older people who are in different life and professional situations.

When such funding began in 2004, objectives and actions aimed at professional activation of older people were actively created primarily by public employment services (hereinafter – PES) because people aged 50 and more were recognized as being a specific group within the labor market. PES activities were supported by non-public organizations, in particular, scientific research units, training institutions and employment agencies, and public benefit organizations.

On the basis of these activities, it is possible to distinguish three basic types of programs for professional activation of older people: national, regional and local. Especially in regional and local programs, there is an effective and extensive cooperation of numerous institutions from PES for professional activation of older people (Urbaniak, et al., pp. 63-83). In this context, it seems reasonable to claim that the negative effects of low professional activity of older people should be identified and addressed primarily at the local community level. Furthermore, all the above-mentioned objectives, instruments and measures to strengthen the professional position on the labor market of people aged 50 plus included in the indicated program recommendations should be strengthened by one of the most important goals of professional activation. This is promoting and implementing flexible forms of work and employment (Litwiński, et al., 2011, pp. 4-9).

5. Conclusions

Anticipating the whole of the above reflection, it is worth recalling again that the development and growth of human capital through an appropriate education system should become the imperative of modernity. In accordance with the above thesis, education is not only a tool for transferring knowledge and skills, but a key determinant shaping social capital. In this light, processes related to the globalization of economies determine, in an increasingly wide range, unexpected stratification and diversification in both the social and economic spheres. Their final effect is the marginalization or exclusion of individuals and social groups from profiting from globalization. In this area of adverse effects of globalization, knowledge and education are included as factors that can limit and minimize. Nowadays, in globalized economies, to surmount barriers demographic change and the aging of the population, the key asset has become knowledge. This is exemplified by the knowledge society, creating competitive and innovative solutions. The globalization process is inevitably associated with the deepening phenomenon of demographic depression in the context of increasing competitiveness of economies. Thus, this is the determiner of the need to permanently increase the level of education, competences and to create and master new knowledge (Grynia, 2016, p. 135). Referring to S. Kwiatkowski, it can be said that having knowledge, and in particular theoretical and practical knowledge about how to effectively learn and how to function in a modern, saturated society, is the best guarantee of using the development potential that nature has provided for humanity (Kwiatkowski, 2000, pp. 24-28).

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