

Situation of vocational school graduates in the labour market – lines of action for its improvement

Sytuacja absolwentów szkół zawodowych na rynku pracy – kierunki działań na rzecz jej poprawy

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Summary: *The aim of this study is to analyse the labour market status of vocational school graduates, as well as to indicate the lines of action for improving their employability, which is determined, among others, by the relatively low quality of education in vocational schools in the context of the needs of the labour market. There is an urgent need for systemic solutions regarding the assessment of the quality of education in vocational schools, for example, along the lines of the Polish Accreditation Commission in Higher Education.*

Key words: *vocational education, labour market, quality of education*

Streszczenie: *Celem opracowania jest analiza sytuacji absolwentów szkół zawodowych na rynku pracy oraz wskazanie kierunków działań w zakresie poprawy ich zatrudnialności, które zdeterminowane jest m.in. relatywnie niskim poziomem jakości kształcenia w szkołach zawodowych w kontekście potrzeb rynku pracy. Istnieje pilna potrzeba rozwiązań systemowych odnośnie do oceny jakości kształcenia w szkołach zawodowych, np. na wzór Polskiej Komisji Akredytacyjnej w szkolnictwie wyższym.*

Słowa kluczowe: *szkolnictwo zawodowe, rynek pracy, jakość kształcenia*

Introduction

Economic security, especially in older age, is a vital necessity. Therefore, the possibility of working and paying insurance premiums throughout one's working life is of particular importance.

In the Polish social security system, retirement pension granted after reaching a certain retirement age and a minimum length of professional experience. The pension sum is also linked to the pension contributions paid by the person. Poland's Social Insurance Institution (ZUS) calculates the pension on the basis of

the capital collected by the person. If there is little accumulated capital, as a result of professional inactivity, pension sums may be low, in extreme cases even below 1 PLN. Research shows that there is an increasing trend in the number of people receiving pension at a level lower than the minimum pension. This is why we are dealing with a rapidly growing number of "new poor pensioners"¹.

From this point of view, it is very important to take up employment immediately after secondary or higher education and/or to combine further education with work. One group of young people who find it particularly difficult

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¹ Piotr Szukalski, Justyna Wiktorowicz, red., *O osobach uzyskujących świadczenia emerytalne niższe niż emerytura minimalna*, Tom 1 (Warszawa: Instytut Pracy i Spraw Socjalnych, 2023).

to enter the market, at risk of poverty in old age, are graduates of vocational schools (trade and technical schools).

The aim of this article is to analyse the situation of vocational school graduates in the labour market and to identify the line of action for its improvement. It is hypothesised that a number of mechanisms were put in place between 2019 and 2023 with the intention of improving vocational education and orienting it towards the needs of the labour market. Still, a universal model of evaluation and improving the quality of education in vocational schools is yet to be developed.

The study assumes that increasing the employability of graduates² is determined by the level of quality of education in vocational schools in the context of the needs of the labour market. There is an urgent need for systemic solutions regarding the assessment of the quality of education in vocational schools, for example, along the lines of the Polish Accreditation Commission in Higher Education. The validity of such a solution has been verified on a local scale, namely the Białystok Functional Area (BOF).³

As R. Gerlach points out, preparing people for employment, to finding employment, i.e. preparing people to meet the needs of employers, is an important task of modern vocational education. This applies to young people who are about to start their first job, as well as adults taking up new jobs and employees who want to maintain their current position, get a promotion, or develop professionally.⁴

For many years, the relatively low activity on the labour market of people with secondary vocational education as well as trade education, including graduates, has been of particular concern.⁵ At the same time, labour demand analyses show that employers are struggling with finding competent employees with vocational training⁶. According to Poland's Central Statistical Office (GUS), in 2022 there were 139.8 thousand recorded vacancies, with the majority of them intended for people with vocational education at trade school and technical school level.⁷

The research methods used in the development of this study include critical analysis of subject literature and analysis of statistical data on the subject matter. The study also presents a model for evaluating and improving the quality of education in vocational schools that has been applied and verified in practice.

Condition of vocational school graduates in the labour market

The data in Table 1 clearly indicates the general decline in the number of graduates in particular types of schools, which is mainly due to the demographic decline. However, the most visible trend is the decline in the number of people attending vocational schools (Level 1 Trade Schools). However, the share of young people graduating from general secondary schools remains the same. The proportion of students in technical schools did not change significantly.

² This article touches upon initial employability of graduates. According to U. Jeruszka, initial employability is the capacity to transition to first career destination after completing formal education. See: Urszula Jeruszka, „Zatrudnialność osób młodych i starszych. Przekonania i działania pracodawców”, *Szkoła – Zawód – Praca* 14 (2017): 111.

³ This article refers to the author's experience related to the development and implementation of the concept of evaluation of the quality of education in vocational schools, the project “BOF Competence Centre – a comprehensive model of support and modernization of the vocational education system in the Białystok Functional Area”. implemented under Podlaskie's 2014–2020 Regional Operational Program in the years 2017–2022.

⁴ Ryszard Gerlach, „Edukacja zawodowa zorientowana na rynek pracy”, *Problemy Profesjologii* 1 (2017).

⁵ Cf. Gabriela Grotkowska, Urszula Sztanderska, „Wykształcenie a podaż pracy w Polsce w okresie transformacji”, *Rynek Pracy* 2 (2019); Baha Kalinowska-Sufinowicz, *Osoby młode na rynku pracy* (Poznań: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Ekonomicznego w Poznaniu, 2023), 104.

⁶ Anna Szczucka, Anna Strzebońska, Barbara Worek, „Wykształcenie zawodowe – bariera czy szansa na rynku pracy? Wyniki badania Bilans Kapitału Ludzkiego”, in: *Wykształcenie zawodowe Perspektywa systemu edukacji i rynku pracy*, ed. Urszula Sztanderska, Elżbieta Drogosz-Zablocka (Warsaw: Wyd. Fundacji Rozwoju Systemu Edukacji, 2019), 134–135.

⁷ *Popyt na pracę w 2022 r.* (Warszawa-Bydgoszcz: Central Statistical Office, Statistical Office in Bydgoszcz, 2023), 26 et seq.

Table 1. *Number of graduates by type of school in 2000–2021 (in thousands)*

Type of school	2000/2001	2010/2011	2015/2016	2020/2021
Basic vocational school / Level 1 trade school	177.4	75.0	55.6	38.6
General secondary school	194.4	221.5	164.5	149.1
Technical School	192.2	125.2	112.5	111.4
Post-secondary school	78.4	82.0	76.4	55.9

Source: *Statistical Yearbook of the Republic of Poland 2001* (Warsaw: Central Statistical Office, 2001), 233; *Statistical Yearbook of the Republic of Poland 2022* (Warsaw: Central Statistical Office, 2022), 344.

To assess the situation of graduates on the labour market, we will use the unemployment rate index according to the Labour Force Survey, as well activity and inactivity indicators. We also treat these indicators as measures of the quality of education in vocational schools.

The skills that young people learn at school and their ability to manage the labour market, also at the end of education, are the final economic measure of the quality of education.⁸

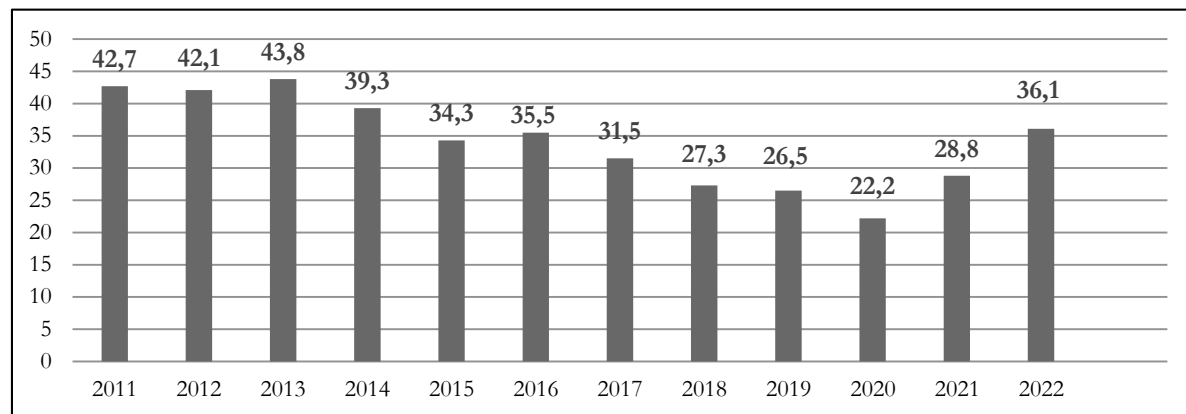
Of course, we are aware that the reasons for the difficult situation of graduates may be determined by a number of other factors. They are the result of objective socio-economic phenomena (e.g. economic crises, demographic situation, processes of restructuring of the economy), expectations of employers (e.g.

high requirements regarding their experience) and are also the result of attitudes and expectations of graduates themselves⁹.

Based on the unemployment rate data, it can be concluded that graduates of vocational schools (trade and technical schools) find it particularly difficult to enter the market – Fig. 1.

The unemployment rate for graduates of vocational training schools according to the LFS is at a very high level of 36.1% in 2022, which is similar to that of 2010 (36.7%).¹⁰

As noted by Z. Wiśniewski¹¹, if young people do not find a job after leaving school and remain unemployed for a longer period of time, serious problems arise, relating to, among other things, delaying the start of adult working life and hindering the process of eco-

Figure 1. *Unemployment rate of graduates of vocational training schools according to LFS (in %)*

Source: GUS data, accessed 15.10.2023, https://sdg.gov.pl/statistics_nat/4-1-a/.

⁸ Maciej Lis, Agata Miazga, „Ocena jakości polskiego systemu kształcenia zawodowego z perspektywy potrzeb rynku pracy”, *Edukacja* 1(136) (2016).

⁹ Cf. Jacek Stasiak, „System edukacji wobec wyzwań rynku pracy w Polsce”, *Acta Universitatis Lodzianensis. Folia Oeconomica* 248 (2011).

¹⁰ It should be noted that the unemployment rate of graduates of vocational training schools according to the LFS is a measure of the implementation of the Sustainable Development Strategy, Objective 4. *Good quality education with regard to the priority Improving the quality and attractiveness of vocational education, improving the matching of vocational training and education to labour market needs*. Accessed 15.10.2023, https://sdg.gov.pl/statistics_nat/4-1-a/.

¹¹ Zenon Wiśniewski, *Młodzież na niemieckim rynku pracy. Kształcenie, przechodzenie do pracy, aktywizacja zawodowa* (Toruń: Wydawnictwo Adam Marszałek, 2021), 7–8.

nomic independence through work. This applies mainly to graduates who are unable to verify their professional skills, and after some time, do not see their life stability or the possibility of permanent employment. They begin to feel frustrated, quickly become discouraged and start to fall into powerlessness and depression. Prolonged unemployment at a young age affects the postponement of the decision to start a family, as well as the deterioration of physical, mental, and various pathologies.

Conducted for the first time in 2021 by the Educational Research Institute, studies based on administrative data gives a much more accurate picture of the situation of vocational school graduates.¹² In December of the 2020 graduation year, the proportion of level 1 trade school graduates who worked was at a similar level to those who did not work or continue their education – in both cases about 36%. Just over 28% continued their education, of which 11% combined their studies with work. In the case of graduates of technical schools of the same year, the percentage of people continuing education is significantly higher – 46% (although studies with full-time work combined, as in the case of graduates of level 1 trade schools, less than 11%). Technical school graduates were less likely to be inactive (25%), but less likely than graduates of trade schools to focus exclusively on professional work (29%).

According to a report monitoring the fate of graduates from 2020 and 2021, respectively, 42 and 38% of graduates of level 1 trade schools did not study or work, thus feeding the “neither here nor there” population. Among technical school graduates, the share of non-working and non-studying graduates from 2020 was 25% and among those from 2021 – 22%.

It should be noted that the COVID-19 pandemic has contributed to the deepening of difficulties with entering the labour market of young people in Poland as well as the EU as a whole¹³. This is especially true for graduates from 2019 and 2020. However, the latter doubly – as students of the last grades, and then as graduates entering the labour market.¹⁴ These problems were related to:

- difficulties in practical learning of the profession (for a large part of the semester, students could not take professional internships and many practical classes). In doing so, they lost the opportunity to connect with potential employers, but also missed out on some practical skills;
- transferring learning from a stationary to a remote mode, leading to reduced contact with the school, teachers, and peers, could also have a negative impact on the situation of students who are less motivated to study;
- low interest of employers to employ workers without work experience;
- a restriction on the activities of the service sector, where young people often start their first job.

Lines of systemic actions to improve the quality of education in adaptation to the needs of the labour market

Over the last few decades, vocational education has undergone a specific type of transformation. In the attempts to reform the vocational education system, a key and recurrent motive is to create a better link between education and the needs of the labour market.¹⁵

¹² Grzegorz Humenny et al., *Raport analityczny. Wyniki monitoringu karier absolwentów szkół ponadpodstawowych i ponadgimnazjalnych. Absolwenci z lat 2020 i 2021* (Warszawa: IBE, 2023).

¹³ Eszter Sándor et al., *Impact of COVID-19 on young people in the EU* (Dublin: Eurofound, 2021).

¹⁴ Małgorzata Kłobuszewska et al., *Sytuacja edukacyjno-zawodowa absolwentów szkolnictwa branżowego podczas pandemii COVID-19. Znaczenie płci, wyuczonego zawodu i posiadania dyplomu w świetle danych sondażowych i administracyjnych*, tom 1 (Warszawa: Educational Research Institute, 2023).

¹⁵ Cf. inter alia: Magdalena Mazik-Gorzelańczyk, *Kształcenie zawodowe w Polsce w perspektywie zmian i potrzeb gospodarki* (Warszawa: Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, Przedstawicielstwo w Polsce, 2016); Janusz Nowak, „Nowa reforma oświaty – szansa czy zagrożenie dla rozwoju szkolnictwa zawodowego?”, *Szkoła – Zawód – Praca* 17 (2019); Michał Sitek, Jędrzej Stasiowski, „Zmiany w organizacji i funkcjonowaniu kształcenia zawodowego w Polsce. Bilans reform 1989–2022”, *Studia BAS* 2(70) (2022).

The reform, which was launched in 2019, is now the third since the political transformation. It is worth noting that in the years 2019–2023 a number of key changes were implemented in trade education, which aim to better adapt education to the needs of the labour market. The 2022–2025 Vocational Education and Training Action Plan adopted in 2022¹⁶ considers further developments in vocational education resulting from economic changes, the development of new technologies and the progressive digitalisation.

In 2019, changes were made to the classification of professions, which now refers directly to trade education. It takes into account the professions previously introduced to the classification of vocational education professions, introduces changes in certain professions, and defines new professions introduced to education in the education system with qualifications separated in them, e.g. programmer technician. The new structure of the classification of occupations of vocational education takes into account the assignment of individual professions to one of 32 trades.¹⁷

In addition, in order to ensure that the offer of education in occupations is adequate to the needs of the labour market, at the beginning of each year a forecast of the demand for employees in vocational education professions at the national and regional level is published.¹⁸ Importantly, in the case of professions for which a special demand is forecast on the national labour market, preferential financing conditions have been introduced: increasing the educational subsidy and increasing the

amount of co-financing to employers for the costs of education of a young employee).

At the same time, because of the amendment to the Act on employment promotion and labour market institutions¹⁹, the provincial labour market councils were obliged to issue opinions on the legitimacy of education in a given profession after reading the forecast. No re-opinion by the council is required for the professions identified in the prognosis (otherwise, a re-opinion is required after 5 years).

At the same time, a career monitoring system has been implemented, which, on the basis of data collected in public registers, annually provides information on the course of educational and professional careers of secondary school graduates.²⁰ Monitoring data significantly increase the accuracy of forecasting the demand for graduates of secondary schools on the labour market.

Close cooperation between vocational training schools and employers is an important element of modern education that meets the needs of the modern economy.²¹ The school providing vocational training should provide this training on the basis of cooperation with employers and practical vocational training should take place as far as possible under real working conditions at employers or on individual farms, as well as in vocational training centres, school workshops, school workshops and lifelong learning centres. The new regulations require the head of the school to establish cooperation with employers before starting education in a particular profession. The basis for establishing cooperation may include

¹⁶ 2022–2025 Vocational Education and Training Action Plan (Warsaw: Ministry of Education and Science 2022). The plan has been developed to fulfil the recommendations arising from the Recommendation of the Council of the European Union of 24 November 2020 on Vocational Education and Training for Sustainable Competitiveness, Social Justice and Resilience 2020/C 417/01 and submitted to the European Commission.

¹⁷ Regulation of the Minister of National Education of 15 February 2019 on the general goals and tasks of education in the professions of vocational education and the classification of professions of vocational education, Journal of Laws of 2019, item 316.

¹⁸ Act of 14 December 2016 – Educational Law, Journal of Laws of 2021, item 1082, as amended), Article 46. The Educational Research Institute was entrusted with the development of the prognosis.

¹⁹ Act of 20 April 2004 on Promotion of employment and labour market institutions, Journal of Laws of 2004, No. 99, item 1001, as amended.

²⁰ Act of 14 December 2016 – Education Law, Journal of Laws 2021, item 1082 as amended), Article 26b. The Educational Research Institute was entrusted with the development of the prognosis. The research reports were referred to in the second paragraph of the article.

²¹ Janusz Nowak, *Nowa reforma oświaty*.

a contract, an agreement, or a letter of intent. Cooperation may include, in particular, the creation of patronage classes, the preparation of curriculum proposals for the profession, the implementation of vocational training, including practical vocational training, the provision of workshops or school laboratories²², the organization of vocational examinations, the implementation of vocational counselling and the promotion of vocational training.

Cooperation with employers can also concern the training of vocational training teachers. Because they were obliged to participate, periodically in three-year periods, in 40-hour training courses at employers or individual farms, related to the profession. The aim of industry training is to improve the skills and professional qualifications needed to perform the work.

Another change in vocational education, related to the involvement of employers, is the possibility of student internships.²³ The basis of the internship is a student internship agreement concluded between the employer hosting the student for the internship and the student or parents or legal guardians of the minor student. The student internship is a complement to the gap in the vocational education system, allowing the student to gain experience in the profession in which he/she is learning from the moment of commencement of education, giving the opportunity to study simultaneously, work practice and earn income in the case of an internship agreement providing for remuneration. In addition, the student internship allows the employer to acquire staff that will correspond to the model of the enterprise and support the local labour market.

Changes in vocational education also include the obligation for students to take a vocational exam. The introduction of the obligation to take the professional exam is a condition for graduation from school or promotion to the next class, after fulfilling the other, existing conditions specified in the provisions of the educational law²⁴. The aim of the implementation of the mandatory vocational exam was to increase the effectiveness of the education process, allowing for an authentic and comprehensive assessment of the actual state of vocational education²⁵.

The reform also introduced the possibility for students to acquire additional skills in occupations that increase their employability.²⁶ The school can allocate about 20–30% of the pool of hours of compulsory educational classes to adapt education to the needs of the local and regional labour market, among others by acquiring additional skills, preparing for obtaining additional qualifications or a certified market qualification.

Important changes have also been made in the area of career counselling.²⁷ The qualification requirements of career counsellors have been specified and the scope and methods of providing counselling in schools was laid out in detail. The curriculum content and the dimension of compulsory vocational counselling classes in kindergartens and schools were also defined. In addition, schools are required to draw up annual counselling programs that are to be part of the in-school vocational guidance system.

The 2023 amendment to the Education Law also envisages the creation of a network of trade skill centres (BCUs).²⁸ Trade skill cen-

²² In order to strengthen the potential of vocational schools, tax legislation has been amended since 2019 to create tax preferences for entrepreneurs (legal persons or natural persons) making donations to public vocational schools, public lifelong learning establishments or public vocational training centres.

²³ Act of 14 December 2016 – Education Law, Journal of Laws 2021, item 1082 as amended), Article 121a.

²⁴ Regulation of the Minister of National Education of 28 August 2019 on the detailed conditions and method of conducting the professional examination and the examination confirming qualifications in the profession, Journal of Laws of 6 September 2019, item 1707.

²⁵ Janusz Nowak, *Nova reforma oświaty*.

²⁶ Act of 14 December 2016 – Education Law, Journal of Laws 2021, item 1082 as amended), Article 122a.

²⁷ Regulation of the Minister of National Education of 12 February 2019 on career counselling, Journal of Laws of 20 February 2019, item 325.

²⁸ Act of 30 August 2023 amending the Act – Education Law and certain other acts, Journal of Laws 2023, item 2005.

tres are nationwide centres of education, training, and examination, available to students, PhD students, industry workers and other learners. BCUs will conduct educational and training activities. They are also supposed to integrate education with business, disseminate innovations and new technologies in a given industry. BCUs are intended to prepare staff for the needs of individual industries in close cooperation with representatives of these industries.

In the years 2023–2024 industry skill centres will be created following regular competitions organized by the Ministry of Education and Science. At least 20 BCUs are expected to be created by the end of 2023 and another 100 by the end of 2024²⁹.

The directions of changes presented in the field of vocational education should be considered as the most appropriate. May they have the greatest impact on improving the quality of education in the context of the needs of the labour market in individual schools, resulting in the improvement of graduates on the labour market.

Assessment of the quality of education in vocational schools – good practices

Although many mechanisms have been implemented with regard to improving vocational training to meet the needs of the labour market, there is a lack of systemic solutions oriented towards evaluating the quality of education at individual school level. A good example may be the Polish Accreditation Commission operating in the field of higher education.

Theoretically, education superintendents are responsible for the quality of education in particular Voivodeships, with their oversight rather reduced to checking that schools are operating in accordance with education legi-

slation. The links between the scale of school enrolment and school programmes and the needs of the labour market go beyond the formal and actual competences of the School Superintendents' Offices.³⁰ This situation does not change the fact that in 2023 coordinators for vocational education were appointed in each province, who deal with, among others, supporting schools in establishing cooperation with employers and employers in establishing cooperation with schools, as well as promoting activities related to the development of vocational counselling in the education system.³¹

Local governments should be interested in improving the quality of vocational school education, which would reduce the scale of mismatch between vocational education services and labour market needs. This can be done through systematic research of labour demand and dissemination of the results of this research, including during vocational guidance sessions addressed to primary school students. On the other hand, knowledge of the directions of demand for work, including the scale of remuneration, can positively influence students' educational decisions and rationalize school choices, taking into account to a greater extent the prospects of performing professional work for many years after graduation.³²

The offer of schools is often derived from their resources, including the availability of staff³³. Currently, vocational school principals have increasing problems with finding properly qualified teachers for youth work, which is mainly due to relatively low salaries (the salary rates of a novice teacher are not much higher than the minimum wage).³⁴

The adjustment of education to the needs of the labour market does not fundamentally change the verification of the education offer by the Voivodeship Labour Market Councils,

²⁹ Accessed 10.10.2023, <https://www.frse.org.pl/kpo-bcu>.

³⁰ Elżbieta Goźlińska, Andrzej Kruszewski, *Stan szkolnictwa zawodowego w Polsce* (Warszawa: KOWE ZiU, 2013), 145.

³¹ Accessed 25.11.2023, <https://www.gov.pl/web/edukacja/koordynatorzy-ko-ds-kształcenia-zawodowego-art>.

³² Elżbieta Goźlińska, Andrzej Kruszewski, *Stan szkolnictwa*, 159.

³³ Maciej Lis, Agata Miazga, „Ocena jakości polskiego systemu kształcenia zawodowego z perspektywy potrzeb rynku pracy”, *Edukacja* 1(136) (2016).

³⁴ Janusz Nowak, „Stan i perspektywy rozwoju szkolnictwa zawodowego w Polsce”, *Edukacja – Technika – Informatyka* 4/26 (2018).

which is limited only to the analysis of the conformity of the assessed direction with the current demand for professions, without detailed verification of the staff, the actual equipment of the school and its real cooperation with employers.

In the article we will refer to the experience related to the development and implementation of the concept of evaluation of the quality of education in vocational schools, the project *BOF Competence Centre a comprehensive model of support and modernization of the vocational education system in the Białystok Functional Area*, implemented as part of the Regional Operational Program of Podlaskie Voivodship for the years 2014–2020 in the period 2017–2022.

Within the framework of the project, the Białystok Accreditation Commission for Vocational Education was established, whose main task was to assess the quality of practical education in vocational schools in the context of the needs of the labour market. The project included thirteen schools from the Białystok Functional Area.

It consisted of representatives of bodies running vocational schools (the City of Białystok and the Białystok District), the school board, universities, labour market institutions, non-governmental organizations, as well as employers – experts representing individual assessed education courses.

The creation of an accreditation system was seen as a tool to improve the functioning of the vocational school. The condition for education, in the context of the needs of the labour market, is to ensure constant adaptation of the teaching base, education programs and competences of the teaching staff to the changing requirements of the environment. The implementation of the concept of quality management, joint learning, and exchange of good practices between schools is essential. Vocational schools should continuously improve the quality of practical education in cooperation with employers.

An important element of the activities was the development of criteria for assessing the quality of education. The assessment of the quality of education in the context of the needs of

the labour market in vocational schools took place at two levels, namely:

- 1) institutional assessment (school performance);
- 2) program evaluation, for each profession in which the school provides education.

In the case of the institutional evaluation, three main criteria were adopted, namely:

- a) having a developed strategy / development program of the school embedded in the context of trends on the general market of educational services and the specific educational needs of the region;
- b) having an internal system of quality assurance and improvement of quality of education,
- c) provide tools to support students in learning processes and entering the labour market.

In turn, four main criteria were used for the program evaluation, such as:

- a) adaptation of education courses and their curricula to the needs of the labour market and their compatibility with strategic documents on a local and regional scale,
- b) personnel policy,
- c) evaluation of the didactic infrastructure enabling the implementation of the education program and the achievement of the assumed educational effects by the students,
- d) evaluation of the actions undertaken to work closely with local employers, up to the implementation of the dual model of vocational training.

Evaluation of the quality of the functioning of the school was carried out in accordance with the developed procedures. The evaluation procedure included:

- 1) preparation by the school of self-evaluation reports, separately in the institutional evaluation part and in the programme part (separately for each field of vocational training);
- 2) an accreditation visit by an evaluation team consisting of labour market experts and representatives of employers representing the various fields of education at the school being evaluated;
- 3) preparation of reports by the assessment team;

- 4) providing reports to the school;
- 5) the school's response to the reports,
- 6) the evaluation team has drawn up an evaluation proposal with a justification,
- 7) adoption of an evaluation resolution by the committee.

The project developed the conditions and scale for awarding the assessment of the fulfilment of the criteria in both the institutional and programmatic part of the evaluation.

The results of a comprehensive evaluation of the activities of schools in the area of BOF with regard to the level of education quality provided the leading authorities with knowledge on the basis of which they could shape specific educational policy in this area on a local scale. It could concern, for example, the rules for opening or closing individual courses of education, changes in financial expenditure on individual schools, or in terms of staff policy. The managing authorities could also take decisions on profiling schools on a local scale, in order to increase the efficiency of education and at the same time improve the situation of graduates on the labour market (e.g. by reducing the educational surplus in the most popular professions among school students).

Summary

In conclusion of the above considerations, it should be noted that there is a persisting mismatch of supply and demand for labour, especially in professions requiring vocational training. For many years, employers' surveys have pointed to deficits of workers in industrial settings as well as machine and equipment operators, as well as people in other positions where competence at the level of secondary vocational education is required. On the other hand, it has been shown that there is a serious

problem of relatively high rates of inactivity and unemployment among trade school graduates and technicians.

The experience of unemployment or passivity at the beginning of a professional career can affect its further continuation for many years³⁵. This implies the need for state action to reduce the costs of this process³⁶.

From 2019 to 2023, many mechanisms were put in place to improve vocational training to the needs of the labour market, which should be assessed positively, but their effects have to wait. However, to date, a universal model for assessing and improving the quality of education in vocational education has not been developed.

The current assessments and rankings of vocational schools are based on criteria that do not allow to assess the adaptation of the educational offer of schools to the needs of the labour market. The most popular ranking takes into account only such criteria as: School successes in the Olympics, results of baccalaureate in compulsory subjects, results of baccalaureate in additional subjects and results of professional examination.³⁷

Therefore, the article presents, in the form of good practice, experience from the implementation of the project, under which the model of assessment of the quality of education in the context of the needs of the labour market on a local scale was developed and implemented. It is so universal that the tested concept will be implemented throughout the Podlaskie Voivodeship³⁸. It can also be a model for all local public units running vocational schools.

Developing a model for ensuring the assessment and improvement of vocational education can be an important element supporting the development of vocational schools and their potential.

³⁵ Paulina Maria Adamczyk, „System szkolnictwa branżowego wobec wyzwań rynku pracy”, in: *System edukacji wobec zmian demograficznych*, ed. Agnieszka Piotrowska-Piątek (Warsaw: Rządowa Rada Ludnościowa, 2023), 137–138.

³⁶ Przemysław Potocki, *Sytuacja osób młodych na rynku pracy w Polsce na tle Unii Europejskiej* (Warsaw: Kancelaria Senatu, 2021), 4.

³⁷ The most popular is the “Perspektywy” ranking. See <https://2023.technika.perspektywy.pl/2023/rankings>, Accessed 27.06.2023.

³⁸ As part of a project implemented in the Podlaskie Voivodeship in 2024–2026, entitled: *Building a system for coordinating and monitoring regional vocational education, higher education and lifelong learning, including adult learning* co-financed by the National Recovery and Resilience Plan, investment A.3.1.1. Support the development of modern vocational education, higher education and lifelong learning.

It also fits perfectly with the European Council recommendations of 24 November 2020 on Vocational Education and Training (VET) for sustainable competitiveness, social justice, and resilience, which states that, attractive vocational education and training tailo-

red to the needs of the labour market can play a key role in preventing young people from losing their jobs and preparing them for future labour market opportunities, in particular under the green and digital transformation program.

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