

EQUALITY OF THE EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE FROM THE RURAL AREA

RÓWNOŚĆ SZANS EDUKACYJNYCH DZIECI I MŁODZIEŻY ZE ŚRODOWISKA WIEJSKIEGO

ABSTRACT

The political and economic transformation in Central and Eastern Europe requires that each person should be prepared to function in modern society. One way to prepare a person to cope with the modern world is to get a proper education. It can be done through the participation of individuals in the school system. The political and economic changes in Poland forced the reform of the education system. One of the main principles of educational reform after 1989, was the decentralization which means the transfer of responsibility for schools to local government units. One of the main motto of this reform was the idea of equalizing educational opportunities for children and youth. One of the local government's responsibilities was to take care of this equalizing educational opportunities.

It is commonly said that children from rural areas have fewer educational opportunities than their peers from schools located in cities. The educational barriers encountered by students of schools located in a rural area are the reason for such situation. The causes of unequal educational opportunities can be divided into two main groups: the educational system obstacles and the environmental barriers. The subject of this research will analyse the current school system in Poland especially located in rural area and see what kind of changes can be observed there after mentioned reform. In addition, we will examine the barriers encountered by participants of the educational system in rural environment. The aim of this publication is to determine whether and to what extent the barriers cause that children and young people in rural areas are less prepared to become full-fledged members of modern society.

STRESZCZENIE

Transformacja polityczna i gospodarcza, jaka dokonała się i dokonuje w Europie Środkowej i Wschodniej, wymaga, aby każda osoba była przygotowana do funkcjonowania w nowoczesnym społeczeństwie. Jednym ze sposobów przygotowania jednostki do radzenia sobie we współczesnym świecie jest zdobycie odpowiedniego wykształcenia. Można to osiągnąć poprzez udział w systemie szkolnym (Banaszak, 2013). Zmiany polityczne i gospodarcze w Polsce wymusiły reformy systemu edukacji. Jedną z głównych zasad reformy edukacji po 1989 r. była decentralizacja, co oznacza przeniesienie odpowiedzialności za szkoły na jednostki samorządu terytorialnego. Jednym z głównych haseł tej reformy była idea wyrównywania szans edukacyjnych dzieci i młodzieży, a zadaniem samorządu – zajęcie się owym wyrównaniem szans edukacyjnych.

Powszechnie uważa się, że dzieci uczęszczające do szkół położonych na obszarach wiejskich mają mniejsze szanse edukacyjne niż ich rówieśnicy ze szkół zlokalizowanych w miastach. Powodem takiej sytuacji są bariery edukacyjne napotymane przez uczniów szkół wiejskich. Przyczyny nierównych szans edukacyjnych można podzielić na dwie główne grupy: edukacyjne przeszkody systemowe i bariery środowiskowe. Przedmiotem badań będzie analiza obecnego systemu szkolnego w Polsce, przede wszystkim placówek zlokalizowanych w obszarze wiejskim, a także zaobserwowanie zmian wynikających ze wspomnianej reformy. Ponadto zbadamy bariery napotymane przez uczestników systemu edukacji w środowisku wiejskim. Celem tego opracowania jest określenie, czy i w jakim stopniu bariery powodują, że dzieci i młodzież z obszarów wiejskich są mniej gotowe, aby stać się pełnoprawnymi członkami nowoczesnego społeczeństwa.

KEYWORDS: *education system, reform of the education system, equality of the educational opportunities, educational barrier, education in rural environment*

SŁOWA KLUCZOWE: *system edukacji, reforma systemu edukacji, równość szans edukacyjnych, bariery edukacyjne, edukacja w środowisku wiejskim*

INTRODUCTION

The political and economic transformation in Central and Eastern Europe requires that each person should be prepared to function in modern society. One way to prepare a person to cope with the modern world is to get a proper education. It can be done through the participation of individuals in the school system. The political and economic changes in Poland forced the reform of the education system. One of the main principles of educational reform after 1989, was the decentralization which means the transfer of responsibility for

schools to local government units. This reform started together with others system reforms in 1991 and it was introduced by the Act from 8th January 1999 – The regulations introducing the reform of the education system. The legal basis of the current education system is the Education System Act from 7th September 1991. One of the main motto of this reform was the idea of equalizing educational opportunities for children and youth.

However, many experts say that children from rural areas have fewer educational opportunities than their peers from schools located in cities. The educational barriers encountered by students of schools located in a rural area are the reason for such situation. The causes of unequal educational opportunities can be divided into two main groups. The first of these are the obstacles placed in front of young from rural area by the education system itself. It is said that there are: less educated and prepared teachers employed in rural schools, lower material base and poorer educational offer of those schools as well as insufficient investment in schools located in country area. The second group of causes are environmental barriers. The most important of these are: worse family's financial situation and parents who are less educated and have lower educational aspirations.

The subject of this research will analyze the current school system in Poland especially located in rural area and see what kind of changes can be observed there after mentioned reform. Due to the fact, that in rural area there are mostly primary and lower secondary schools, we will focus only on those kinds of educational institutions. Talking about the educational system reform we will put the attention on the main idea of this reform which is the idea of equalizing educational opportunities for everybody, no difference where is the place of their residence. In addition, we will examine the barriers encountered by participants of the educational system in rural environment. The aim of this paper is to determine whether and to what extent the barriers cause that children and young people in rural areas are less prepared to become full-fledged members of modern society.

THE REFORMS OF EDUCATION SYSTEM IN POLAND

The education in Poland is in the process of continuous transformation. Attempts to reform began in the interwar period. In 1919, the general assumptions

of changes in education were announced. They were based on such grounds as universal education, and standardization and unification of school programs (Pilch, 1999, p. 52). These main objectives should be implemented through the introduction of free, compulsory and available to all primary schools. Then, the education could be continued at the secondary level, represented by the type of general education schools. Learning process, further, could be also continued at the level of higher education. Another requirement is the introduction of the education system, which would be managed by the state and society. In addition, there were a call for raising the level of education of the teaching staff, both working in the urban and in the rural areas (Pilch, 1977, p. 8).

Objective difficulties faced in Poland in the interwar period did not allow for the full realization of the set of postulates. Therefore, immediately after World War II, people returned to the idea and concept of reform. It has been postulated the introduction of primary education for a period of 8 years (Pilch, 1999, p. 52). Again, these postulates have encountered difficulties in their implementation. It is well known that the idea of 8-year primary schools was introduced about 15 years after the placing this postulate. Also in terms of the organizational system, the primary education was not entirely uniform. The significant differences between the better-organized schools in urban and rural schools were visible. It seems that the demand of free basic education was realized the most fully.

The next step in the process of reforming the Polish education system was taken in the seventies of the twentieth century. A new attempt to change education could be seen during that period. The changes were introduced because of a concern about the quality of education as well as they were motivated by political ideologies. Resolution of the People's Republic of Poland Parliament from 13th October 1973 introduced the reform of school system in our country. Parliamentary resolution noted that the new education system should ensure – high level of general education, by organizing public and compulsory education system at the secondary level, which would provide better opportunities for young people especially gifted, and simultaneously provide care and conditions for children with deviations from the standards development (Monitor Polski. Dziennik Urzędowy PRL, 1973, nr 44, poz. 260). This passage shows that the authors of the reform depended, at least in

theory, to ensure equal educational opportunities for all, regardless of ability or place of residence. This conclusion is also confirmed by another statement from this document: – the school will be uniform in terms of programming in the city and the countryside (Monitor Polski. Dziennik Urzędowy PRL, 1973, nr 44, poz. 260). Many good objectives of this reform have never been implemented. For a time, they tried to push the idea of 10-year primary school. Finally, the failed experiment was terminated by the Resolution of the Parliament in 1982. The existence of collective municipal schools and the huge devastation of small schools located in the countryside were the remains of this reform. It need to be said that in the years 1970–1982 the number of rural schools decreased by 57% (Pilch, 1999, p. 53).

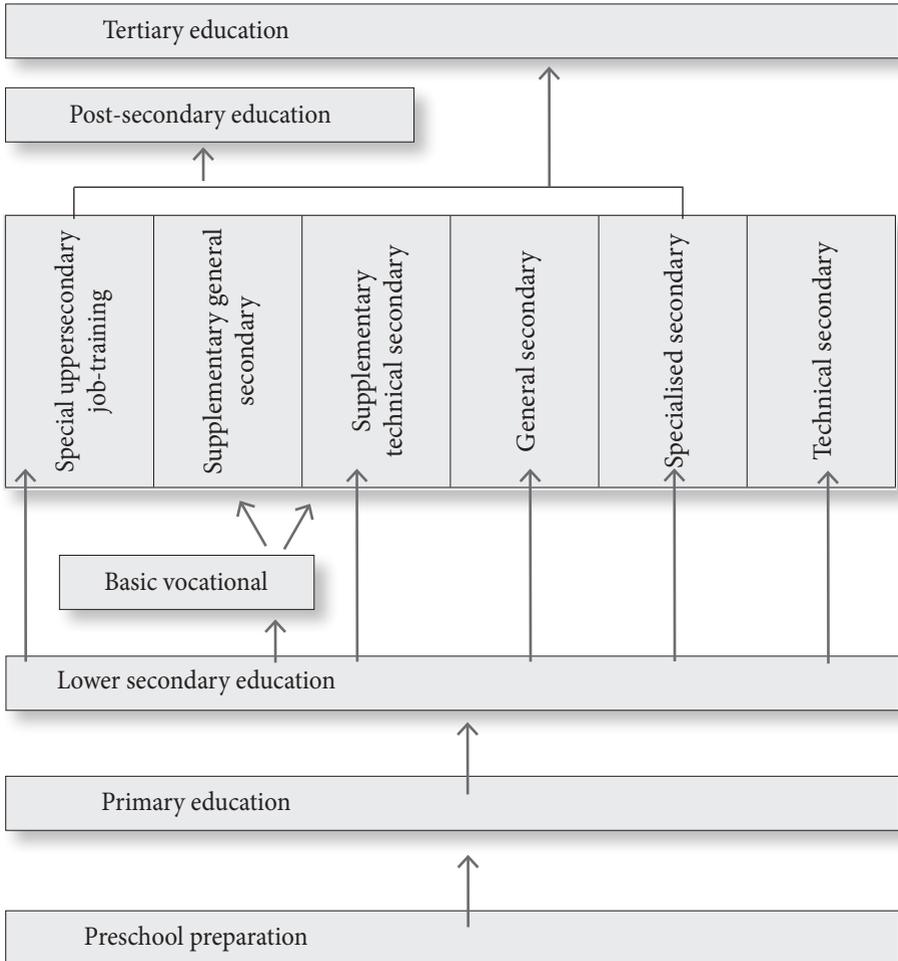
Created by mentioned reforms education system functioned until the early nineties. During that time, the period of transition in Poland started. The changes and the reforms in many areas of political, economic and social life were introduced. The reform of education system was one of them. The current educational system in Poland is based on the regulation contained in the Education System Act from 7th September 1991. The system consists of several levels: preschool preparation, primary education, lower secondary education, secondary education and tertiary education.

The reform made many changes in the education system in Poland. It totally changed the schooling system in Poland. It also introduced the new evaluation system by introducing external exams at every level. It is not the purpose of this article to analyze in details the reform. Most of all, we would like to show that one of the main idea of this reform was implementation of the principle of equal educational opportunities for every participant in the system of education.

The reform was initiated by the Jerzy Buzek's government. The Prime Minister in his expose from 11th November 1997 which was delivered at the Polish Parliament said: – Education is an investment of nations and free people in their own future. The education and higher education will decide about the Polish position among other countries. Education determines the identity of the nation and the development of its culture in terms of openness to the world. Education is the best way to equal opportunities in life. Therefore, it is necessary to consider carrying out a radical reform of the education system and adapting it to the requirements of the twenty-first

century (Buzek, 1997). The Education Act says that the newly introduced system should provide: “reduce disparities in terms of education, upbringing and care between the various regions of the country, especially metropolitan centers and rural areas” (Dz.U. z 1991 r., nr 256, poz. 2572 z późn. zm.).

Chart no 1:
The Polish Education System



Source: Prepared on the basis of Główny Urząd Statystyczny, 2013 Education in 2012/2012 School Year, p. 39

In conclusion, we can say that there were several different attempts to change the education system in our country. Those reforms implemented many various changes but in every case one of the main idea was the care of equality of educational opportunities for every person. The reform of 1999 also talks about this idea. The problem is that important is to have good legal regulation but even more important is to make a good law to enter into force, and that every citizen could use it and benefit from it. It must be said that the reform of education system, on the law regulation level, provides equal educational opportunities for children and young people from urban and rural environments. However, there are some barriers and obstacles which cause that the guaranteed in theory idea of equality is not always implemented in practice.

BARRIERS TO EQUALITY OF EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

The idea of equal opportunities should be implemented primarily in the education system. Unfortunately, practice shows that this is not always truth in Polish schools, especially those located in rural areas. Implementation of the noble idea of equal opportunities still meets all kinds of barriers and obstacles. The analysis of situation in schools located in rural area and comparison of these schools to schools in urban area shows two different groups of barriers.

The first group of those obstacles is placed in the educational system itself. Different researches shows that in rural schools are less educated and prepared teachers, those schools have lower material base and poorer educational offer and there is insufficient investment in schools located in country area.

The preparation of teachers is one of the mentioned problems. The level of education and the degree of professional promotion of teachers could be a good indicator of the quality of teaching stuff. It is commonly said that worse teachers works in schools located in rural area. This applies to both education and career degree. There are four levels of professional promotion for teachers working in Polish schools. The regulation of Ministry of Education from 1st December 2004 on obtaining degrees of professional promotion by teachers

says that there are: trainee teachers, contractual teachers, appointed teachers and chartered teachers. The idea is to get the higher degree what means to have more appointed and chartered teachers in school.

At the beginning of transformation period the situation with the level of teacher's education was not good. There were fairly large group of teachers working in school without higher education. The comparison the teachers employed in rural and urban schools shows that there were more less educate teachers in rural area.

Table no 1

The teachers with the higher education

| Year | Poland | Rural area |
|------|--------|------------|
| 1994 | 60,8% | 51,9% |
| 1998 | 80,7% | 76,3% |
| 2002 | 90,2% | 88,9% |

Source: Own compilation based on data from Główny Urząd Statystyczny, 2003, Education in 2002/2003 School Year, p. 418

The statistic data shows that there was a problem with the level of educating among Polish teachers. It also shows that in analyzing periods of time there were more teachers with better education working in urban area than in rural area. Especially at the beginning of the nineties, the difference was clearly seen.

This situation changed in current time. The law regulation and the situation on the labor market caused that right now almost every teacher working in school both in rural and urban area have higher education. One of the reports from 2011 shows that there was 97,6% teachers with higher education working in Polish schools and now is no difference between schools in cities and in country (Zarębska, 2011, p. 11).

Similar situation is with the degree of professional degree. At the beginning teachers from rural school have lower degree but through years the situation changed and the differences are not visible any more.

Table no 2

The teachers with the degree of professional promotion

| School year | Appointed teachers | | Chartered teachers | |
|-------------|--------------------|--------|--------------------|--------|
| | Urban | Rural | Urban | Rural |
| 2002/03 | 70,75% | 76,47% | 8,4% | 5,69% |
| 2006/07 | 45,05% | 48,23% | 32,55% | 30,91% |
| 2012/13 | 26,81% | 28,10% | 50,02% | 50,62% |

Source: Own compilation based on data from Główny Urząd Statystyczny, 2003, *Education in 2002/2003 School Year*, p. 420 and Główny Urząd Statystyczny, 2013, *Education in 2012/2013 School Year*, p. 250–251

The data shows that early there were more teachers with higher degree working in urban schools than in rural ones. But, similar like in the case of education level the situation changed and currently there is no difference in that matter. In both kinds of school teachers have the same degree of professional promotion.

The another barrier which was shown by researchers was the worse material base and the worse educational offer of schools located in country. They also pointed on the problem of the amount of funding allocated to schools. The truth is that this thesis was correct at the beginning of transformation period. Many school in villages and small towns was not well equipped. There was lack of teaching aids, there was a problem with computers too. Also, students from urban school could use larger set of additional lessons. In addition, there was big problem with the foreign languages teaching in rural schools. As an example we can give the information about the language teaching in schools. In school year 2003/04, 76,68% students learned foreign languages in Poland. There were 78,5% in cities and only 73,8% in villages and small towns (Główny Urząd Statystyczny, 2004, p. XLII).

But also in these matters the situation currently changed. Both urban and rural schools are now well equipped. Every student in every Polish school, no difference where it is located, has access to computers. In addition, every Polish student not only can but also must learn foreign language. Only the situation of funds allocated for rural and urban schools is still less favorable

to those from rural area. Schools located in the cities have more students and consequently have more financial resources. Small, rural schools still have a problem in this matter. Schools in villages and small towns are not able to keep up with the educational subsidy and they are dependent on the additional resources from local governments and often on their good will.

In addition to the barriers that are in the education system itself, there are also obstacles, located in environment from which the pupils come. There are: worse family's financial situation and parents who are less educated and have lower educational aspirations. It is obvious that in order to get a good education, it is necessary to have relevant financial and material conditions in the family home. In addition, it is important to have the well-educated environment.

First problem is the material situation of family from which the students come. We will not show here the detailed data regarding the comparison of financial situation of people living in urban and rural area. But it is commonly known that the situation of homes from villages and small town is worse than the situation of people living in bigger towns or cities. The financial situation has impact on the living condition and those may affect the child's social adjustment and educational achievement. The research shows that children and young people from families better situated are better socially adapted and they perform better in schools (Weisbrot-Koziarska, 2000, p. 72). To give the clear picture of that situation we can show the juxtaposition of the net income of households in different of places of residence.

Table no 3

The net income of households by class of place of residence in 2013 in PLN

| The place of residence | The net income for household | The net income for person |
|------------------------|------------------------------|---------------------------|
| City above 500 000 | 4309,38 | 2028,89 |
| City 500 000 – 200 000 | 3633,15 | 1604,03 |
| City 200 000 – 100 000 | 3279,73 | 1386,86 |
| City 100 000 – 20 000 | 3200,73 | 1320,92 |
| City less than 20 000 | 3301,11 | 1279,20 |
| Villages | 3094,31 | 1001,01 |

Source: Own compilation based on data from Panek i Czapiński, 2013, *Social Diagnosis 2013*, p. 42

Also, the indicators of poverty and deprivation show that more people poor and people with problems live in rural area.

Table no 4

Aggregate indexes of poverty and deprivation by class of place of residence in 2013

| The place of residence | Poverty range | Deprivation range |
|------------------------|---------------|-------------------|
| City above 500 000 | 2,48 | 28,45 |
| City 500 000 – 200 000 | 2,44 | 34,20 |
| City 200 000 – 100 000 | 4,06 | 38,46 |
| City 100 000 – 20 000 | 4,08 | 43,61 |
| City less than 20 000 | 4,43 | 45,60 |
| Villages | 8,42 | 57,41 |

Source: Own compilation based on data from Panek i Czapiński, 2013, Social Diagnosis 2013, p. 348–349

From this information it is clear that the level of income in rural areas is lower than in cities. Especially, the big difference can be observed when we take into consideration the income for one person. In that case the difference are very visible and we can state that children and young people from villages are in worse situation than their peers from towns and cities.

The next barrier that should be discussed here is the education of the environment from which the students come. Also in that case, it is truth that people who come from better educated families are better motivated to have higher school achievements and consequently to get higher education. All researches made during past years show that the level of education in Poland goes up. However, if we compare those levels for urban and rural area, we will see that this comparison is unfavorable for individuals living in villages and small towns.

The level of education is connected with the educational aspiration. People who are better educated will more care for the education of their children. There is simple relationship between own education and the efforts to provide education to the next generation. Above data indicates not only

lower education level among people from rural area but also we can conclude that the greater number of less educated people will have lower educational aspiration and there will not be pressure on taking care of the education of their children.

Table no 5

The structure of education in Poland by class of place of residence in 2013

| Level of education | Urban area | Rural area |
|---------------------------------------|------------|------------|
| Higher education | 21,4% | 9,8% |
| Secondary education | 35,4% | 25,3% |
| Basic vocational | 18,4% | 32,5% |
| Primary and lower secondary education | 0,9% | 2,2% |

Source: Own compilation based on data from Główny Urząd Statystyczny, 2012, *Wyniki Narodowego Spisu Powszechnego Ludności i Mieszkań 2011*, p. 14

In that part of this work the barriers and obstacles to equality of educational opportunities which are put in front of children and young people from rural were presented. Those barriers were divided into two groups – obstacles located in education system and in environment from which students come and in which students live. Researches made during last decade show that there was a lot done to level differences between schools in cities and villages and to improve the situation of people from rural area. While the system itself is constantly improving, the situation of the rural environment does not look good and in some situations are getting worse.

EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES OF PEOPLE FROM RURAL AREA

It was said many times and it is commonly know that good education provides security, allows the development and prepares the individual to function in contemporary society. Therefore, it is worthy to see if people who live in villages and small towns are to the same extent as their peers from cities prepared to fulfill their role in society. In other words, we should

check whether the above-mentioned barriers and obstacles actually reduce the chances of young people from the rural environment for decent life in the modern world.

One of the more important modification which was introduced to the education system in Poland by last reform was changes in the evaluation system. Before 1999, the verification of person knowledge and skills was primarily made through the matura examination taken at the end of the secondary or middle school. New rules introduced two new exams – first taken at the end of primary school and following at the end of junior high school (lower secondary level). It is important to underline that these are external exams and every examinee is evaluated according to the same standard. Because, the rural education is mostly limited to two kinds of school – primary and lower secondary, we will try to see what results children and youth achieve on these exams.

Examination taken at the end of primary school includes a test of knowledge of the humanities and math and science. The student can achieve a maximum score of 40 points.

Table no 6

The results of final primary school examination

| The place of residence | 2014 | 2013 | 2010 | 2007 |
|-------------------------|------|-------|-------|------|
| Villages | 24,7 | 23,01 | 23,05 | 25,6 |
| Town less than 20 000 | 25,1 | 23,23 | 24,0 | 26,1 |
| Towns 200 000 – 100 000 | 26,3 | 24,36 | 25,2 | 27,1 |
| Cities above 100 000 | 27,8 | 26,08 | 26,4 | 28,1 |

Source: Set of results in certain years is based on data taken from Report of Centralna Komisja Egzaminacyjna in 2014, 2013, 2010 and 2007

Examination taken at the end of lower secondary school includes three parts. First includes two humanistic exams: Polish language – “H1” and history and civics – “H2”, second part also includes two tests: mathematics – “M1” and science (biology, chemistry, physics and geography) – “M2” and the third part includes foreign language test – “L” which can be taken on two levels: basic and advanced.

Table no 7

The average results (%) of final lower secondary school examination

| The place of residence | H1 | H2 | M1 | M2 | L |
|-------------------------|----|----|----|----|----|
| Villages | 60 | 56 | 46 | 58 | 58 |
| Town less than 20 000 | 60 | 56 | 46 | 57 | 60 |
| Towns 200 000 – 100 000 | 62 | 58 | 48 | 59 | 66 |
| Cities above 100 000 | 66 | 61 | 52 | 62 | 71 |

Source: Results are based on data taken from Report of Centralna Komisja Egzaminacyjna in 2013

The scores achieved by pupils from rural and urban environments show that at both level – primary education and lower secondary education, students from rural areas have lower scores than their peers in the cities. This relationship is repeated in time and applies to each of taken during the exam school subjects. In every case, the urban schools have a better score than rural schools.

In order to show that people who lived in rural area are in worse situation and have worse position than those who live in cities, we can presented one more research. It show the number of people who are in age 15–24 and who are passive professionally and educationally, it means they do not work and do not attend to any school either.

Table no 8

People passive professionally and educationally in age of 15–24

| The place of residence | 2000 | 2007 | 2013 |
|------------------------|------|------|------|
| Villages | 16,0 | 11,5 | 8,3 |
| Town and city | 10,8 | 9,6 | 12,5 |

Source: Own compilation based on data from Panek i Czapiński, 2013, *Social Diagnosis 2013*, p. 89

Presented data shows that number of people who are 15–24 years old and who neither work nor go to schools is bigger in villages than in towns and city. The numbers are changing but the trend is still the same. The situation is

worsened by the fact that the number of people who are passive is decreasing in cities by about 50% between 2000 and 2013 and in villages after a period of improvement again we notice growth.

Talking about educational chances and opportunities of people living in rural area we have to take into consideration one more fact. After primary school and lower secondary school, those student make choices about next stage of education. According to Polish education system they should go to high school (secondary level). Theoretically, they are free to choose any school consistent with their interests. Unfortunately, in practice, this choice is limited by many factors but when you talk with those people they say that the most important restriction applies to travel to a new school. Basically, the choice is limited to the schools to which you can easily get from their home village. In some cases, a good choice would be a boarding school but here we are faced with another obstacle which are financial problems and the impossibility to bear the costs of accommodation outside the home. Therefore it is often happen that young people who lived in rural area start to attend school which are worse in quality and do not necessarily consistent with their interest or abilities.

Polish educational law make no difference between people living in rural or urban area. Theoretically, every person has the same chance to get good education and be well prepared to future life. Unfortunately, theory does not always go hand in hand with practice. Many studies still show that children and young people from the rural environment have still achieved worse results in school and they have still been worse prepared to function in the modern world.

CONCLUSION

The Time of political transformations forced many changes in different areas of life. Also, Polish education has to adapt to these changes. Accordingly, the education system was reformed. One of the main objectives of this reform was the idea of equal opportunities for children and young people from the rural environment. In order to create a coherent and strong society, it was rightly assumed that we should start the transition with the changes in the education system.

Despite of good intentions, practice has shown that the situation of children and young people in rural areas is still worse than their peers from the urban environment. There are many barriers and obstacles that were located in the system as well as in the living environment.

These barriers were particularly troublesome at the beginning of the transformation period. Schools in rural areas were less equipped, had less prepared teachers, as well as financial expenditure on these facilities were lower than in the cities. The educational offer proposed by the school was also poorer. The teaching of foreign languages, access to new technologies and the developing interest in extra-curricular activities were at a lower level than in urban schools.

This situation began to improve over time. Particularly, it was noticeable after the Polish accession to the European Union. Using of EU funds has resulted in improving the condition of school equipment. By participating in various EU programs, rural schools organized language learning and other extra activities. In addition, most schools received high-quality computer labs. All this meant that the situation of rural schools has significantly improved.

Also, the changes in educational law were significance. Detailed and quite strict rules for hiring teachers as well as the labor market situation meant that the level of teachers' education and preparation to work in rural schools is now comparable to those teachers from urban schools. Also, the obligation to learn foreign languages from the beginning of primary school was introduced.

All these positive changes did not lead to complete leveling the differences between rural and urban education. The results of external examinations still show the same trend - students from rural schools achieve worse results. Also, the population of the villages is still worse educated than the population of the cities.

Reasons for such state may be few. Nevertheless, it seems that the most important of these has environmental background. Higher level of poverty and deprivation makes that children and young people from the village are learning worse than their peers in the cities. Education, although free to a certain level, is in reality very expensive. And therefore, the poorer environment is in worse situation.

The examination results achieved by pupils from rural and urban areas have led to the conclusion that no necessary environmental factors, but social conditioning affects the results of external examinations. This shows that the differences between the results of urban and rural schools are not as important as differences in the results between schools situated in areas with high unemployment and poverty and those in area where unemployment and poverty are smaller (Mytkowski, 2002, p. 1–4). If to this assertion, we add the fact that rural areas are generally characterized by higher unemployment and lower levels of wealth, the thesis seems to be entitled that the idea of equality of educational opportunities for people in rural area is destroyed by the poverty and its sources.

Lower wealth has also impact on the fact that the educational level of people in rural areas is lower than people in cities. People with lower education have also lower educational aspirations towards their children and therefore pays less attention to education.

Rural schools have undergone a big transformation in the last 15 years. It must be underline that it was a transformation for the better. Despite the many good changes, there is still much to do. To improve educational opportunities for children and young people from the rural environment, the system of extra-curricular activities should be strengthened. Young people from rural areas should have similar opportunities as their municipal counterparts to participate in the additional language classes, hobby or artistic activities and have access to culture. It is also important to take up the problem of organization of free time for these children and youth. A good idea would be to use existing, but not always properly functioning, of rural community rooms. So far, these places are primarily used for weddings, parties and other environmental events. Employment specialists with teacher training would allow better and more efficient operation. These places could become a centers of science and culture, where children and young people could count on help in learning or where the interesting meetings could be organized. It would also be important to deal with adults – parents, who have a huge impact on the development of their children. Allowing adult to develop their skills, to complete their education or to gain an education could have a very positive impact on increasing educational opportunities for

children and young people in rural areas. Schools, kindergartens and other educational institutions functioning in the rural environment should also lead the pedagogization of parents.

Unfortunately, little has changed, however, in the rural environment itself. Still there is a lot of unemployment and poverty. It seems that currently, the greatest efforts to equal educational opportunities should go towards improving the quality of life of the rural environment and towards the fight against social exclusion in this environment. Reinforced materially and mentally environment may receive better educational opportunities and thus these people will be better prepared to function in the modern world.

References

- Banaszak, A. B. (2013). *Oświata i edukacja a bezpieczeństwo społeczne* w: Such-Pyrgiel, M. (red.) *Bezpieczeństwo społeczne w XXI wieku w ujęciu socjologicznym, pedagogicznym, prawnym i nauk o zarządzaniu*, Wydawnictwo WSGE, Józefów.
- Główny Urząd Statystyczny (2003). *Oświata i wychowanie w roku szkolnym 2002/03*, Zakład Wydawnictw Statystycznych, Warszawa.
- Główny Urząd Statystyczny (2004). *Oświata i wychowanie w roku szkolnym 2003/04*, Zakład Wydawnictw Statystycznych, Warszawa.
- Pilch, T. (1999). *Spory o szkołę. Pomiędzy tradycją a wyzwaniem współczesności*, Wydawnictwo Akademickie Żak, Warszawa.
- Pilch, T. (1977). *Szkoła i nauczyciel w procesie przemian środowiska wiejskiego*, PWN, Warszawa.
- Weissbrot-Koziarska, A. (2000). *Warunki materialno-bytowe a przystosowanie społeczne dzieci z rodzin wiejskich*, „Edukacja”, No. 2, p. 65–73.

Legislative acts

- Uchwała Sejmu Polskiej Rzeczypospolitej Ludowej z dnia 13 października 1973 r. w sprawie systemu edukacji narodowej (Dz.U. z 1973 r. nr 44, poz. 260).
- Ustawa z dnia 7 września 1991 r. o systemie oświaty (Dz.U. z 1991 r. nr 95, poz. 425). Taken [25.05.2015] from <http://isap.sejm.gov.pl/DetailsServlet?id=WDU19910950425>.
- Ustawa z dnia 8 stycznia 1999 r. – Przepisy wprowadzające reformę ustroju szkolnego (Dz.U. z 1999 r. nr 12, poz. 96).

Rozporządzenie Ministra Edukacji Narodowej z dnia 26 marca 2013 r. w sprawie uzyskiwania stopni awansu zawodowego przez nauczycieli (Dz.U. z 2013 r. poz. 393). Taken [25.05.2015] from <http://isap.sejm.gov.pl/DetailsServlet?id=WDU20130000393>.

The Internet sources

Buzek, J. (1997). *Expose Prezesa Rady Ministrów*. Taken [25.05.2015] from <http://sztuki.awardspace.info/serwis/exjbp.html>.

Centralna Komisja Egzaminacyjna (2007). *Osiągnięcia uczniów kończących szkołę podstawową w roku 2007*. Taken [25.05.2015] from http://www.cke.edu.pl/images/stories/Spr_07/spraw_sp_a.pdf.

Centralna Komisja Egzaminacyjna (2010). *Osiągnięcia uczniów kończących szkołę podstawową w roku 2010*. Taken [25.05.2015] from http://www.cke.edu.pl/images/stories/001_Sprawdzian_2010/sprawdzian_2010_spr.pdf.

Centralna Komisja Egzaminacyjna (2013). *Osiągnięcia uczniów kończących gimnazjum w roku 2013*. Taken [25.05.2015] from http://www.cke.edu.pl/images/files/gimnazjum/sprawozdanie_2013/2013_Gimnazjum.pdf.

Centralna Komisja Egzaminacyjna (2013). *Osiągnięcia uczniów kończących szkołę podstawową w roku 2013*. Taken [25.05.2015] from http://www.cke.edu.pl/images/files/sprawdzian/informacje_o_wynikach/Sprawdzian_2013_1.pdf.

Centralna Komisja Egzaminacyjna (2013). *Wstępna informacja o wynikach sprawdzianu w 2014 roku. Zestawienie ogólnopolskie*. Taken [25.05.2015] from http://www.cke.edu.pl/images/files/sprawdzian/informacje_o_wynikach/Sprawdzian_2014_wstep/SPR_2014_Informacja_p.pdf.

Główny Urząd Statystyczny (2012). *Wyniki Narodowego Spisu Powszechnego Ludności i Mieszkań 2011. Podstawowe informacje o sytuacji demograficzno-społecznej ludności Polski oraz zasobach mieszkaniowych*. Opracowanie przygotowane na Kongres Demograficzny w dniach 22–23 marca 2012 r. Taken [25.05.2015] from http://stat.gov.pl/cps/rde/xbcr/gus/lu_nps2011_wyniki_nsp2011_22032012.pdf.

Główny Urząd Statystyczny (2013). *Oświata i wychowanie w roku szkolnym 2012/13*. Taken [25.05.2015] from http://stat.gov.pl/cps/rde/xbcr/gus/E_oswiata_i_wychowanie_2012-2013.pdf.

Mytkowski, D. *Społeczne uwarunkowania przestrzennego rozkładu wyników sprawdzianu i egzaminu gimnazjalnego w 2002 roku*. Taken [25.05.2015] from http://www.cke.edu.pl/podstrony/archiwum/don_bad1.pdf.

- Panek, T., Czapiński, J. (2013). *Kształcenie dzieci*. In: J. Czapiński, T. Panek (ed.), *Diagnoza społeczna 2011. Warunki i jakość życia Polaków* (p. 107–110). Taken [25.05.2015] from <http://ce.vizja.pl/en/issues/volume/7/issue/4>.
- Panek, T., Czapiński, J. (2013). *Wykluczenie społeczne*. In: J. Czapiński, T. Panek (ed.), *Diagnoza społeczna 2011. Warunki i jakość życia Polaków* (p. 342–375). Taken [25.05.2015] from <http://ce.vizja.pl/en/issues/volume/7/issue/4>.
- Zarębska, J. (2011). *Nauczyciele w roku szkolnym 2010/11*. Taken [25.05.2015] from http://www.bc.ore.edu.pl/Content/279/Nauczyciele+2010-2011_RAPORT_ostatnia.pdf.