

Summary of the Ph.D. Thesis

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The title of the thesis: **Vocational education of students in upper secondary schools in the context of changes resulting from the 2017 education system reform**

Key words: **vocational education, education reform, organization of vocational education, educational offerings, teaching programs, educational and vocational guidance, professional qualifications, vocational competencies, technical education, vocational schools**

Abstract:

Vocational education plays a significant role in reducing unemployment and aligning the skills of young people with the changing demands of the job market. Given that it is currently less popular than general education, it is essential to ask: how can the changes resulting from the 2017 education system reform contribute to improving the quality of vocational education and restoring its lost status?

In the methodology section of this dissertation, the results of research conducted among students and teachers of vocational schools, as well as employers collaborating with schools in the context of practical vocational training, were presented. The aim was to answer the following research questions:

1. How is vocational education organized in upper secondary schools after the 2017 education system reform?
2. To what extent does the vocational education offered by a particular school align with the interests of students and the requirements of the job market?
3. How is the vocational curriculum implemented, and is it tailored to the individual needs and abilities of students?
4. To what extent is the vocational curriculum adapted to the needs of the job market, and do employers participate in its development?
5. How is the cooperation between the school (school environment) and employers carried out?

6. In the opinion of the school community, how does the active involvement of employers in post-secondary education contribute to raising the level of vocational preparation, oriented towards adapting students to the current needs of the job market?
7. What is the current state of educational and vocational guidance in schools, and what role do career advisors play in students' choice of future career paths?
8. How do the provisions resulting from the education reform, including the elimination of middle schools (gimnazjum), the reintroduction of an 8 -year primary school, and the extension of education in secondary schools, affect the process of equalizing educational opportunities among students?
9. How prevalent is the phenomenon of marginalization among students of vocational and technical schools?

In the era of technological revolution, globalization, and demographic challenges related to migrations and the aging population, improving the education system, including vocational education, has become a necessity. Therefore, in order to evaluate changes in the field of vocational education, it is necessary to consider all factors that can contribute to increasing its effectiveness. The analysis of conducted research has identified several significant problems that Polish vocational education continues to face despite the implemented reforms. To improve the situation in vocational education, actions such as increasing the level of financial investment in vocational school infrastructure and adapting equipment to the needs of practical vocational training, considering students' interests and aligning the educational offerings with employers' expectations, collaborating with employers in the process of curriculum development, co-financing programs of cooperation between schools and employers, and increasing the accessibility of educational and vocational guidance for students should be taken.

Implementing these changes can enhance the attractiveness of vocational education and enable young people to acquire necessary skills, thereby increasing the flexibility of the educational system and adapting it to the changing needs of the job market.