



Effective  
Education for  
Employment:  
Warsaw,  
Poland  
Interview  
Series



## Marlena Falkowska

Marlena Falkowska is the Head of International Cooperation and Promotion Unit at the Centre for Education Development, working in various roles to develop teachers' in-service training since 2003. She has an international perspective on education and deep practical experience, having worked as both a primary school teacher and headmistress.

In this interview Mrs Falkowska describes the changing relationship between teachers and pupils in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

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### Key Findings

- Issues around developing core competencies are, in part, addressing European integration in Education.
- There are problems with the status and low salary levels of teaching.
- The concept of inviting employers to participate in education design is a new one in Poland.
- The role of the teacher in the classroom is changing fundamentally.
- Stakeholders in Poland's education system are working together to develop more interactive pedagogical approaches.

*"Children are like flowers – they don't all blossom on the same day."*

*“Education should start from when a child is born.”*



**Current teacher training does not focus enough on developing teachers' practical skills and techniques:**

*The process of change has begun, in part, as a reaction to the Bologna process, but we have don't yet have enough focus on skills; there is not enough balance between theory and practice.*

**A modern teacher must be a coach and mentor as opposed to the person who merely imparts information and knowledge:**

*Students have many resources at hand in modern-day classrooms and it is the teacher's job to show students the different ways to acquire knowledge, how to cope with different sources, and find what is relevant from the large amount of information available.*

**Both teachers and students need instruction in 'core' competencies:**

*Skills for negotiation and reaching consensus... these are what we will all need in our adult life. How can we create or teach these competencies in students, if teachers do not have them themselves?*

**There are some core attitudes and behaviours that all school leavers need to develop if they are to compete and thrive in the 21<sup>st</sup> century workplace:**

*Creativity and flexibility, and the ability to adapt to new situations – these things are so important.*

**Learning must be linked to the real world:**

*Students must feel that what they are learning is practical. We need schools where students learn things they can use in real life; what future employers will expect from them.*

**Salary levels and the low status of teachers are a problem in Poland:**

*In Poland, salary levels come nowhere near matching the expectations of the brightest and best – our teachers, as compared to their peers in other EU states, have low salaries.*

**A single, coherent vision for education is needed in Poland:**

*Now there are two Ministries of Education... Different visions do not work together in education; you need one consistent, universal vision.*

*“Creativity and flexibility, and the ability to adapt to new situations – these things are so important.”*

**Good education starts early:**

- **Child's pre-school experience is fundamental:** *Education should start from when a child is born. The first two or three years are crucial to a child's education.*
- **The socialization of children:** *We need to provide opportunities for children to socialize by sending them to kindergarten... It is important they get this contact with other children in a group setting.*