



Effective
Education for
Employment:
Warsaw,
Poland
Interview
Series



Witold Jurek

Witold Jurek is the Undersecretary of State, Ministry of Science and Higher Education (MNiSW) and a specialist in the field of economics. He is a former chancellor of the Poznań University of Economics and held the position of the Polish Government's deputy in the European Commission's Fifth Framework Program.

Mr Jurek's interview provides a real insight into some of the priorities of the Polish Government in regards to developing a 21st century education system.

Key Findings

- The educational system in Poland needs to be more responsive to the needs of the economy.
- Polish HEIs need to increase their competitiveness in order to attract the most talented foreign students.
- In October 2009 the Polish Government began the process of developing forms of education orientated to labour market needs.
- A National Qualifications Framework is currently being developed.
- A Quality assurance process has been launched which will be used to measure the distance between higher education programmes and the needs of the economy.

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The core characteristics that all new entrants to the workplace should have:

- **Adaptability:** *One set of core characteristics is a reflection of the constant and rapid change that is a feature of today’s labour market. It includes adaptability to a changing environment and readiness to undergo training to upgrade or expand one’s skills.*
- **Being prepared for the modern workplace:** *Individuals need a set of core competencies or characteristics, including ICT literacy, teamwork and problem-solving skills and self-reliance.*

Educational reform in Poland is adjusting higher education provision to labour market needs:

Obligatory collegial bodies (convents) in state vocational higher education institutions will include, among others, representatives of municipal authorities and the business sector. They are designed to build strong, productive links between HEIs and the wider socio-economic environment.

The importance of quality assurance in education:

New criteria have been introduced to the quality assurance process, measuring levels of linkage between higher education programmes and the needs of the economy.

Traditional teaching methods are being challenged:

Hands-on, interactive experience should be used whenever possible, involving open discussions and a free exchange of ideas. Committing minor details or formulae to memory should be de-emphasised.

The characteristics of high performing employees:

High-performing employees typically have a number of features in common, including high levels of motivation, a willingness to pursue

additional training opportunities, and excellent time-management and communication skills.

Employers must be involved in both education design and delivery:

Employers can play a vital role in enhancing the alignment between the skills of graduates and the needs of the economy. Where appropriate, they should be involved in shaping curricula for vocational schools and universities and participate in teaching activities. They should also be invited to have a say in evaluating outcomes of vocational education and the development of quality assurance systems.

“It is ultimately up to the individual to be in charge of his or her personal development.”

The ideal school environment encourages children to think for themselves:

The ideal school environment should, first and foremost, recognise and develop pupils’ innate talents. It should inspire curiosity on the one hand, and scepticism towards common but unsubstantiated views on the other hand. It should also encourage independent thinking, rather than submitting to established authorities.

Individual responsibility and a supportive environment key to personal development:

It is ultimately up to the individual to be in charge of his or her personal development. However, the immediate social environment of a person also plays a role, particularly early on. It is vital for that environment, mainly the parents and teachers, to identify and nurture any creative endowment exhibited by a pupil or student.