



Effective Education for Employment: Warsaw, Poland Interview Series



Witold Wozniak

As Deputy Director for the National Centre for the Support of Vocational and Continuing Education (KOWEZiU), Witold Wozniak oversees the improvement of vocational education of teachers and vocational guidance programmes to help students choose the right educational career path to support their future plans.

In this interview Mr Wozniak outlines the main challenges facing vocational education and training in Poland.

Key Findings

- Students in Poland often see vocational education as a “negative choice” taken when they don’t feel they will qualify for an academic route.
- Students are creating and running virtual companies through online simulations, even occasionally setting up commercial partnerships with real businesses.
- The amended Education System Act allows expert practitioners to teach in vocational schools and colleges.
- Stakeholders in Poland are looking to develop a shared vision for education in Poland.
- A new educational paradigm is needed in which informal learning outside the classroom is recognised as part of a life-long learning strategy.

“My vision is of independent, autonomous systems of learning with an independent examination system... This is what we need.”

“We don’t yet have one shared vision for education in Poland.”



Vocational education in Poland suffers from low prestige:

We have to deal with something called negative choice – this is when students believe their choice (to take a vocational route) is determined by a belief they will be unsuccessful in applying for academic courses.

The delivery of vocational education is not sufficiently flexible:

There is no mobility and flexibility within the system, which means it’s very difficult to educate employability skills and behaviours in students.

“Creativity and inventiveness... I consider these to be national characteristics in Poland!”

There are risks associated with bringing industry experts into the classroom:

I am aware that many of these highly skilled experts may not have the pedagogical skills required to get their message across and become effective teachers.

In Poland, being ‘entrepreneurial’ is a state of mind:

We even have students who have created companies that go onto become successful... In Polish (the language) entrepreneurship is not a skill but an attitude - a sensibility.

Schools cannot be solely responsible for teaching attitudes and behaviours:

What a person does is always going to be

influenced by what’s going on around them – external factors play a significant role. Schools describe values – honesty, accountability and so on – as required, but this doesn’t guarantee that a student will live by these once they leave school.

There is a lack of a shared vision for education in Poland:

We don’t yet have one shared vision for education in Poland. A group of experts from the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Higher Education and other ministries have been working for some time on the joint vision: The Lifelong Learning Strategy, but the document is not yet ready...

A new paradigm for education is needed:

We need to base education on results, on assessment of an individual’s skills and competencies not just on process or formation...whether they are learning in or outside the classroom.

KOWEZiU is working towards evaluation and assessment of competencies that professionals develop through their working life as part of a learning outcomes approach:

...(We need) ongoing validation of results of non-formal and informal learning, which does not exclude those who don’t have the formal education associated with specific competences...This is a real barrier to people who cannot get a certificate for the skills they have acquired

There is growing demand for the development of ‘open source learning’:

There are a growing number of validation projects, often funded by the European Social Fund, to evaluate learning outcomes derived from informal and non-formal education. My vision is of independent, autonomous systems of learning with an independent examination system... This is what we need.