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**EDUCATIONAL BARRIERS AND OPPORTUNITIES  
FOR YOUTH FROM AREAS OF FORMER  
STATE-OWNED FARMS BASED ON THE EXAMPLE  
OF GRODZICZNO MUNICIPALITY**

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**ABSTRACT.** This paper aims at presenting the results of studies conducted in Grodziczno municipality in the province of Warmia and Mazury concerning educational barriers and opportunities for lower secondary school youth from areas of former State-owned farms.

**Key words:** education, farmer State-owned farms

### **Introduction**

Education has become the foundation of development of the contemporary world – knowledge based economy and learning society. Educated society is the “capital” determining achievement of both economic goals, which is confirmed by the theories of human capital and experiences from development of the so-called industrialized countries, as well as basic human rights and human development goals. Investments in human capital are long-term investments. They represent one of the main factors stimulating socio-economic development and determining the level of international competitiveness of the economy (**Kisiel and Marks-Bielska 2002, Marks-Bielska and Białobrzaska 2005**).

In a modern market economy, the quality of human resources is one of the major factors determining competitiveness of the region. Currently productivity, competitiveness and effectiveness are determined to a lesser and lesser extent by material production factors and increasingly by the resources of technological, economic and organizational knowledge that allows development of new technologies, products and services as well as the skills of using that knowledge in the economy, which again is the function of the level of education and abilities of innovative thinking.

Education is the basic method of acquiring human capital in contemporary economies. In case of the analysis of the influence of education on economic growth and other components of social welfare attention is drawn to the quantitative aspects of education as well as attempts are made to measure the influence of the qualitative aspects of education (Na prostej?... 2003). In Poland, however, education is becoming relatively expensive and money becomes the increasingly important criterion of selection in access to education. This is of particular importance in Warmia and Mazury voivodship where low level of wealth is one of the basic social problems. Before the systemic transformation, around 50% of agricultural land in the area was owned by State-owned Farms (PGR). At the beginning of 1990, there were more than 100 large, agricultural enterprises and companies consisting of multiple units within the area of the present Warmia and Mazury voivodship. State-owned agriculture of the region employed ca. 65 000 people.

Former State-owned Farms are locations of multiplication and accumulation of many negative phenomena such as unemployment, poverty, marginalization, lack of perspectives and pathologies. Those phenomena and processes in an obvious way draw attention to the young generation that represents an important link in the process of passing the economic achievements, social and cultural capital within the family. It is well known that poverty and unemployment in those communities had and still have influence on the current situation and prospects for the future of the children of former employees of the State-owned farms growing up within new circumstances and, frequently, experiencing a very difficult financial situation of the family (**Tarkowska and Korzeniewska 2002**).

Youth is an important period of human life during which the system of values develops. This is the time of formation of specific behavioral patterns and methods for achievement of goals (**Sikora 2001**). According to **Tarkowska (2002)**, the attitude of rural youth to education, its aspirations and educational careers represent an important, current subject worth serious consideration by researchers of the transformation, the more so as deep changes take place in the area of education at a rapid pace. At present, a similar percentage of rural and urban youth takes the decisions concerning continuation of education but the conditions for implementation of educational aspirations are still much more difficult for the rural than for the urban youth (*Kapitał społeczny...* 2004).

### **Methodological assumptions of the studies**

The studies aimed at identification and presentation of major socio-economic problems of residents in post-State-owned farm settlements. The paper presents the selected results of studies concerning educational opportunities of the youth from former State-owned farm communities. The scope of studies encompassed former employees of State-owned farms and members of their families. The study covered 84 persons (27 former State-owned farm employees, 27 spouses (among whom 9 persons used to work at State-owned farms) and thirty children in the lower-secondary school age group). The method of diagnostic pole was the basic method applied. The questionnaire was the basic research technique used. Two different questionnaires were prepared – one targeted at the lower-secondary school youth and the other targeted at the parents.

The questionnaire-based study was carried out at the turn of November and December 2004. The timeframe of the analysis covered the years 1989–2004. The empirical studies were of dynamic nature. The questions included in the questionnaire offered the possibility of analysing interesting phenomena from the period preceding the studies as well as such phenomena for the future on the basis of plans, opinions and expectations of the respondents. The study was conducted in the municipality of Grodziczno, county of Nowe Miasto, Warmia and Mazury voivodship where formerly 3 State-owned Farms: Linowiec, Montowo and Katlewo were situated.

### Discussion of the results of studies

The possibility of continuing education after completing the lower-secondary school was one of the issues studied. The majority of answers provided by the parents of students (53.3%) indicated that they could cover the costs of further education of their children to a minor extent only. That is why many of the lower-secondary school students will not be able to continue their education for economic reasons. Almost a half (43.3%) of the respondent parents stated that covering the costs was impossible. Only one respondent answered that he could cover the full costs. Another issue covered by the study was the financial capacity of the parents to equip the children with basic course books (Fig. 1).

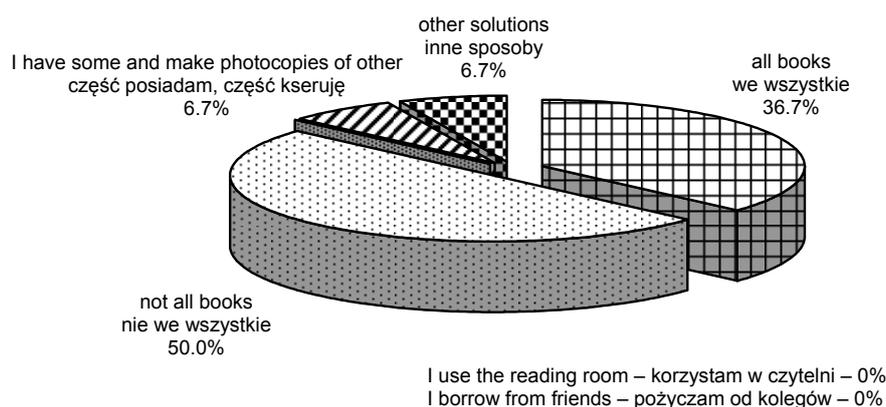


Fig. 1. Provision of youths from former State-owned farms with school course books  
Source: own work based on the results of studies.

Ryc. 1. Wyposażenie młodzieży popegeerowskiej w podręczniki szkolne  
Źródło: opracowanie własne na podstawie wyników badań.

Data provided by CBOS indicates that the larger the number of children in the family the lower amounts are allocated to course books by parents (per one child). That situation is linked mainly to the financial standing of the family. The children have various opportunities to use course books when the parents cannot afford buying them.

A half of the students was equipped with school course books, but not with all of them. Students, whose parents purchased all the books represented 36.7% of the popula-

tion. None of the respondent students used the books at the reading room or borrowed them from friends. Only two persons answered that they possessed only some of the books while they made photocopies of the others. Borrowing books from a library is another possibility of obtaining course books. In case of two students some books were borrowed from a library while the rest was purchased by the parents.

Provision of the children with schoolbooks is closely correlated with the material standing of the family. Parents spend the largest amounts on education before every new school year. The expenditures related to the beginning of the school year include such as schoolbooks, educational equipment and compulsory fees such as the insurance. The results of the studies conducted are compared with the data presented by CBOS in the following table (Table 1).

**Table 1**

**Expenditures related to commencement of the school year according to the respondent parents**  
**Wydatki związane z rozpoczęciem roku szkolnego według ankietowanych rodziców**

| Level of expenditures<br>Wysokość wydatków | Households<br>Gospodarstwa domowe |      |                          |
|--|-----------------------------------|------|--------------------------|
|  | own studies<br>badania własne     |      | CBOS* data<br>dane CBOS* |
|  | number<br>liczba                  | (%)  | (%)                      |
| Up to PLN 100                              | 1                                 | 3.7  | 1.0                      |
| PLN 101-200                                | 1                                 | 3.7  | 1.0                      |
| PLN 201-300                                | 6                                 | 22.2 | 7.0                      |
| PLN 301-500                                | 9                                 | 33.3 | 36.0                     |
| Over PLN 500                               | 10                                | 37.1 | 52.0                     |

\*The CBOS data does not add to 100 because of the additional answer: "undetermined amount" (expenditures incurred but the amount was not specified by the respondents).

Source: own work based on the information by CBOS (2004) and own studies.

\*Dane CBOS nie sumują się do 100 ze względu na dodatkową odpowiedź: „nieokreślone wydatki” (wydatki, które zostały poniesione, lecz ich wysokość nie została określona przez respondentów).

Źródło: opracowanie na podstawie informacji CBOS (2004) i badań własnych.

The conducted studies show that in 2004 two families allocated less than PLN 200 for expenditures related to commencement of the school year. According to the data by CBOS, the majority of families (52.0%) spend more than PLN 500 for the purpose. Among the post-State-owned farm families 37.1% incurred expenditures exceeding PLN 500. Similar to the studies by CBOS, such households represented the highest percentage among the group covered.

Internet use in Poland is less proliferated than in other countries at a compatible level of economic development. CBOS studies indicate that in 2004 14.0% of adult Poles possessed at home a computer and fixed link telephone or cable television but had no Internet access. Use of the Internet is highly diversified. Access to the Internet de-

pend, among others, on the social position, material standing and education. The higher the education and better the material standing are the lower the technological barriers. Internet is the tool very useful to the young generation. The young people, using the Internet, prepare for classes and obtain information from many different areas.

The majority of young people from former State-owned farm communities answered "no" to the question "Do you possess access to the Internet?" The majority also answered that they use the Internet only during the information sciences classes (63.3%) while 16.7% of the respondents used the Internet at the reading room and 13.3% used it occasionally (at their friends, at an Internet café). Only 2 persons (6.7%) had access to the Internet at home. Also 2 persons answered that they did not use the Internet at all as the financial standing of the family does not allow purchase of the equipment while they did not have classes in information sciences.

Comparing the data obtained from the studies with the results obtained by CBOS it can be concluded that the youth from former State-owned farm communities has limited access to the Internet. Students from Grodziczno municipality have fewer opportunities to use the Internet network at school as compared to the national data. The number of people from families of former State-owned farm employees using the Internet at home differs immensely from the numbers given in the CBOS studies. For comparison, among lower-secondary school students 6.7% possess access to the network while according to the results presented by CBOS 50.0% of the respondents used the Internet at home (Table 2).

Table 2

**Places where the youth uses the Internet**  
**Miejsca, w których młodzież korzysta z Internetu**

| Place<br>Miejsca | Own studies<br>Badania własne | CBOS data<br>Dane CBOS |
|------------------|-------------------------------|------------------------|
|                  | (%)                           |                        |
| School – Szkoła  | 63.3                          | 76.0                   |
| Home – Dom       | 6.7                           | 50.0                   |

Source: own work based on the information by CBOS (2004) and own studies.

Źródło: opracowanie własne na podstawie informacji CBOS (2004) i badań własnych.

The level of abilities represents a very important factor determining the opportunities of the young generation for the future. The level of those abilities can be represented by participation in subject Olympics (competitions for students in knowledge on various subjects covered by the curriculum; Table 3).

Analysis of the data presented in Table 3 indicates that two students always participate in the Olympics, 40.0% of the youth from former State-owned farm communities answered that they participated in the Olympics sometimes while more than a half of the lower-secondary school students do not participate in the Olympics at all.

Learning of foreign languages is a very important component in the education of the youth. A foreign language is a compulsory subject for children and youth in elementary and post-elementary schools. The largest proportion of lower-secondary school students (56.0%) in Warmia and Mazury voivodship learn English. German is the second language

**Table 3**

**Participation of the youth from former State-owned farm communities in subject Olympics**  
**Uczestnictwo młodzieży popegeerowskiej w olimpiadach**

| Participation in the Olympics<br>Uczestnictwo w olimpiadach | Number of answers<br>Liczba odpowiedzi | Percentage of answers<br>Procent odpowiedzi |
|---|--|---|
| Always<br>Zawsze  | 2                                      | 6.7   |
| Sometimes<br>Czasami  | 12                                     | 40.0  |
| I do not participate<br>Nie uczestniczę                     | 16                                     | 53.3  |

Source: own work based on the results of own studies.

Źródło: opracowanie własne na podstawie wyników badań.

as concerns the number of attending students with 32.8% share (Rocznik statystyczny... 2003). The studies showed that all lower-secondary school students attended English at school. Two persons additionally attended private lessons. The possibilities of participating in paid forms of education is linked to the economic standing of households. An additional form of education such as, e.g. private tutorial in a foreign language influences the educational opportunities of students and, as a consequence, their social position in the future.

All the above-presented factors influencing educational opportunities of the youth are linked to, among others, the material standing of the households. That standing also influences significantly the abilities of the student to learn. An example here could be the place in which the child works on the homework and learns. The studies conducted showed that every fifth family had only one room. The average number of people living in such apartments was 4.33 persons. The largest proportion of the youth (43.3%) declared that they shared the room with their siblings. The average number of children in those households was 4.77. Only 36.7% of the respondent lower-secondary school students had their own room.

The distance between the school and the place of residence plays an important role in the daily life. The sample covered consisted of lower-secondary school students living in the area of 3 former State-owned Farms, i.e. the youth coming from different villages.

According to the answers provided by the respondent students, 60.0% of them must travel between 2 and 5 km to school. Every tenth student had to travel more than 5 km to school. Students belonging to 9 households covered the distance of up to 2 km. The distance to school is linked to the means of travel to and from school. The vast majority of students (93.3%) traveled to school by bus, which was a special school bus, while 2 persons walked to school. Those were the students living up to 2 km away from the lower-secondary school.

The studies conducted indicated that 73.3% of the lower-secondary school students intended to leave the rural area in the future. That could indicate lack of prospects for that youth in their place of residence. Students who did not intend to leave the villages wanted to work in the future in vocations such as a mechanic or a joiner. Only few of

the students planned to attend the local secondary technical school. The material standing of their families did not allow covering the costs involved in continuation of their education or allowed covering only a part of such costs. Factors such as education, social origin, level of affluence of the parents, contacts, protection and place of residence are factors conditioning the success and prosperity in the lives of the children. Those factors influence the lives of the young generation with diversified force (Table 4).

**Table 4**  
**Factors influencing success and prosperity of children according to parents**  
**Czynniki wpływające na sukces i powodzenie dzieci w opinii rodziców**

| Factors<br>Czynniki                           | Influence on success and prosperity of children<br>Wpływ na sukces i powodzenie dzieci |                         |                             |                         |
|---|--|-------------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------|
|   | high<br>duży   |                         | low<br>mały                 |                         |
|   | own study<br>badania własne  | CBOS* data<br>dane CBOS | own study<br>badania własne | CBOS* data<br>dane CBOS |
|   | (%)  |                         |                             |                         |
| Education<br>Wykształcenie                    | 88.9   | 89.0                    | 11.1                        | 9.0                     |
| Affluence of parents<br>Zamożność rodziców    | 63.0   | 81.0                    | 37.0                        | 15.0                    |
| Place of residence<br>Miejsce zamieszkania    | 55.6   | 72.0                    | 44.4                        | 21.0                    |
| Social origin<br>Pochodzenie społeczne        | 44.4   | 55.0                    | 55.6                        | 38.0                    |
| Contacts, protection<br>Znajomości, protekcja | 40.7   | 90.0                    | 59.3                        | 8.0                     |
| Other<br>Inne                                 | 3.7  | –                       | –                           | –                       |

\*CBOS data do not total to 100 because the additional answer: "hard to say".

Source: own work based on the information by CBOS and own studies.

\*Dane CBOS nie sumują się do 100 ze względu na dodatkową odpowiedź: „trudno powiedzieć”.

Źródło: opracowanie własne na podstawie informacji CBOS i badań własnych.

Education is the factor conditioning the life success according to 88.9% of the respondents. CBOS respondents considered education the most important factor influencing success in 89.0% of cases. Studies also indicate that affluence of parents also has a high position (63.0%). Comparing the results it can be concluded also that for CBOS respondents contacts and protection were the most important factor (90.0%), while among the population of former State-owned Farm employees that answer was given by 40.7% of the respondents.

In our study the number of respondents considering affluence of parents to be the most important factors is lower by 18.0% than the number of such respondents in CBOS data. Also fewer people from post-State-owned farm population believe that the place of residence is of major importance for success and prosperity. The number of such respondents is 16.4% fewer than among the respondents to the CBOS study.

Among many factors that the respondents considered of low importance for achievement of success and prosperity 2 are on the leading positions. They are contacts and protection (59.3%) and social origin (55.6%). Also among CBOS respondents the majority answered that social origin was the factor with low influence on success of children (38.0%).

Attitudes of the young generation are highly influenced by attitudes and behaviors of the parents determined by their vocational position and social status. Also conditions of education determined by opportunities offered by the education system and the educational aspirations of the youth are important. Those opportunities determine the life opportunities and influence the probability that the young people will find themselves at the same positions in the social structures as their parents (Marginalność... 1999, **Poławski** 1999).

The more frequently the parents consider education a very important factor facilitating the lives of the children the more effort they take to give them appropriate education. According to the answers given by the respondent parents (Table 5), the largest number of the respondents would like their children to receive appropriate education as that would give them a "better start in life" (88.9%). According to 7.4% of the respondents education allows quick finding of a job. Only one person answered that appropriate education would allow the children taking a job and residence in town.

Table 5

**Parents' opinions on appropriate education of their children**  
**Opinie rodziców na temat starannego wykształcenia ich dzieci**

| Opinions<br>Opinie   | Number<br>Liczba | Percentage<br>Procent |
|--|------------------|-----------------------|
| Education will give my children a "better start in life"<br>Wykształcenie zapewni moim dzieciom lepszy „start życiowy” | 24               | 88.9                  |
| Education will allow them finding a job faster<br>Wykształcenie umożliwi im szybkie znalezienie pracy                  | 2                | 7.4                   |
| They will be able to hold high positions<br>Będą mogły piastować wysokie stanowiska                                    | –                | –                     |
| They will be able to achieve my unfulfilled aspirations<br>Będą mogły realizować moje niespełnione aspiracje           | –                | –                     |
| Other – Inne   | 1                | 3.7                   |

Source: own work based on the results of own studies.

Źródło: opracowanie własne na podstawie wyników badań.

Education of children is influenced by actions taken by the parents, who aim at improving their living conditions and, as a consequence, the situation of the families (Fig. 2).

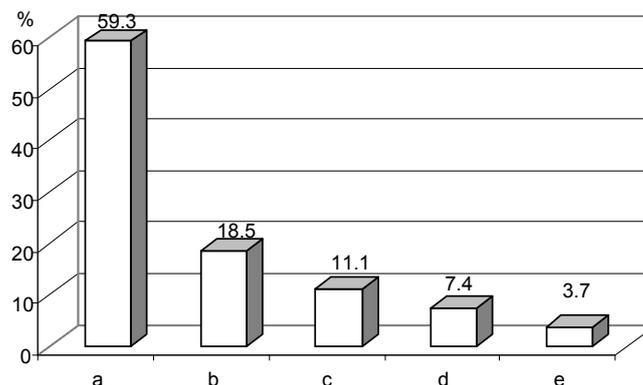


Fig. 2. Declared activities of parents aimed at improving the material standing of the family: a – taking up an occasional job, b – taking up a job in town, c – moving abroad for permanent stay, d – change of the place of residence, e – improving own vocational qualifications

Source: own work based on the results of own studies.

Ryc. 2. Deklarowane działania rodziców w celu polepszenia sytuacji materialnej rodziny: a – podjęcie okazjonalnej pracy, b – podjęcie pracy w mieście, c – wyjazd na stałe za granicę, d – zmiana miejsca zamieszkania, e – podniesienie swoich kwalifikacji zawodowych

Źródło: opracowanie własne na podstawie wyników badań.

Among the respondent parents, more than a half (59.3) was ready to take an occasional job, not necessarily consistent with their qualifications. On the other hand 10 persons could improve their vocational qualifications to work in a different vocation. Every fifth person wanted to take a job in town. Only two respondents pointed out that they could change the place of residence to get a job offering an apartment at the same time. All those activities aim at improving the material standing of the family. Some persons declared that they would be ready to satisfy a number of conditions at the same time to improve the economic standing. One person could improve the vocational qualifications to be able to work in a different vocation, take up an occasional job, not necessarily in line with the qualifications and take up a job in town.

Unfortunately the respondent parents very rarely take up specific actions aimed at improvement of the economic standing of their families and allowing obtaining appropriate education by their children. The activities specified by the parents covered by the study in their vast majority remained just declarations.

## Conclusion

The youth living in settlements of former State-owned farms has very limited possibilities of gaining education and implementing their further plans for life. Among the respondents – lower-secondary school students 50.0% was equipped with some course books only. Covering further education related expenses is another important issue.

Almost a half of the respondents (43.3%) stated that covering those costs was impossible.

The attitude of parents to education of their children is positive. Although the majority of them has low level of education as only 5 persons had secondary education and that was the highest level of education in the studied population, when asked their opinions on education of their children the majority of them (88.9%) responded that it was very important and it could give their children a “better start in life”. The same percentage of parents perceived appropriate education of their children as a factor of major influence on their success and prosperity in the future.

A very important thing for allowing achievement of life plans of the youth is that their parents should take specific actions and not only, as in case of the vast majority of the respondents, declare willingness of taking them. Such activities include those aiming at improving the material status. More than a half of the parents (59.3%) was ready to take up occasional jobs, not necessarily consistent with their qualifications and every third parent declared willingness to improve vocational qualifications to be able to work in a different vocation.

Without institutional help of the State in removing barriers to access to education of the youth from former State-owned farm communities is far from possible. The Agency of Agricultural Property, as of January 1, 2005, has not taken any actions aimed at vocational activation and social assistance to former employees of State-owned farms. The only program implemented until June 30, 2005 was the program of scholarships.

The Council of Ministers, in the Resolution 39/2006 of March 28, 2006, approved the Government program for equalizing the educational opportunities of students from families of former State-owned agricultural enterprises for the years 2006-2008, which is a part of the National Program of Scholarships included in the list of Government strategic documents. This program continues the program of scholarships implemented by the Agency of Agricultural Property targeted at students starting education at public secondary schools offering the opportunity to obtain the certificate of secondary education.

The Program of Gap-Closing Scholarships implemented by the Enterprise Educational Foundation operating in agreement with the National Bank of Poland, Polish-American Freedom Foundation, Bank Pocztowy S.A., PZU Foundation, Jan Kanty Steczkowski Foundation, BRE Bank S.A. Foundation and Polskie Młyny S.A. company with organizational support of the Agency of Agricultural Property can represent another step in acquiring funds for further education of youth from families of former employees of State-owned farms. The program aims at helping such youth in overcoming the barriers involved in starting education at a tertiary school by funding scholarships for the first year of full time master degree studies.

An opportunity can also be offered by the European Union Structural Funds (Integrated Regional Development Operational Program) within e.g. measure – equalizing educational opportunities through scholarship programs. The scholarships are intended for students from marginalized areas and for sure areas of former State-owned farms are such areas.

Individualized and targeted aid taking into consideration the personal characteristics of residents in settlements that used to be part of former State-owned farms is necessary. Such activities should aim, at their initial stage, at creating the minimum conditions of existence and next offering the opportunities for development.

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## BARIERY I SZANSE EDUKACYJNE MŁODZIEŻY Z TERENÓW POPEGEEROWSKICH NA PRZYKŁADZIE GMINY GRODZICZNO

### S t r e s z c z e n i e

Artykuł ma na celu przedstawienie wyników badań przeprowadzonych na terenie gminy Grodziczno w woj. warmińsko-mazurskim, dotyczących barier i szans edukacyjnych młodzieży gimnazjalnej z terenów popegeerowskich.

Konieczne jest określenie systemowych rozwiązań problemów środowisk popegeerowskich, bowiem ludzie zamieszkujący tereny po byłych PGR nie są w stanie samodzielnie zaradzić sytuacji, w której się znaleźli. Problemem pozostającym do tej pory bez rozwiązania jest wyrównywanie szans kształcenia dzieci i młodzieży, pochodzących ze środowisk popegeerowskich. Umożliwienie podwyższenia poziomu wykształcenia młodzieży pochodzącej ze wsi, a szczególnie z obszarów po byłych PGR, jest warunkiem koniecznym, aby ta grupa mogła w przyszłości skorzystać, w większym stopniu niż obecnie, z pozytywnych skutków transformacji gospodarczo-ustrojowej i integracji z Unią Europejską.