

DIGITÁLNÍ NOMÁDSTVÍ JAKO KLÍČOVÁ PERSPEKTIVA ZMĚN NA TRHU PRÁCE

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Abstrakt

Rychlejší a dostupnější cestování znamená, že pojem “světoobčan” získává více než dříve na aktuálnosti a odráží globalizující digitální realitu. Digitální nomádství chápáné jako nový rozměr práce na dálku jistě získalo na přelomu let 2020 a 2021 na významu. Vypuknutí pandemie Covid-19 v roce 2020 významně urychlilo digitalizaci v rovině pracovní i vzdělávací, což významně ovlivnilo i naše socioekonomické fungování. Mezilidské vztahy prošly proměnou, digitální vzdělávací a profesní realita odhalila nový rozměr pro lidská očekávání, prostor a čas získaly nový význam, náš každodenní život se významně přesunul do roviny technologické. Digitální nomádství rostoucí v kultuře inovací jako fenomén, který automaticky reaguje na současné změny v sociálním, vzdělávacím a profesním životě, je v dnešní době hodnoceno pozitivně i kriticky. Bez ohledu na názor na tento jev se však zdá, že ukazuje směr nového životního stylu.

Představení fenoménu digitálního nomádství jako klíčové perspektivy změn na trhu práce je cílem a základním tématem tohoto článku. Analýza změn v oblasti práce je východiskem pro prezentaci fenoménu digitálního nomádství. Článek se věnuje i tématu vzdělávacích a profesních aspirací mladých lidí, otázce adekvátnosti a profesní vhodnosti, stejně jako modelu současné kariéry. Závěr zahrnuje vzdělávací trendy, které také stojí za to rozvíjet do budoucna jako součást celoživotního učení. Článek je teoretická studie. Cíle a metodika citovaných výsledků výzkumu jsou uvedeny v závorkách.

Klíčová slova: kompetence, budoucnost práce, digitální nomádství, zaměstnanec, zaměstnavatel, trh práce, celoživotní učení, strategie, vzdělávání

DIGITAL NOMADISM AS A KEY PERSPECTIVE OF CHANGES IN THE LABOUR MARKET

Abstract

The possibility of faster and more available travel makes the term “citizen of the world” more real than ever and reflects the globalizing digital reality. Digital nomadism understood as a new dimension of remote work has certainly acquired a new meaning at the turn of 2020 and 2021. The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 significantly accelerated the digitization of work and education areas, which had a valid impact on our socio-economic functioning. Interpersonal relations have changed, the digital educational and professional reality has given a new shape to human expectations; space and time take on a new meaning, our everyday life is situated in an increasing technological dimension. Digital nomadism growing in the culture of innovation as a phenomenon that automatically responds to current changes in social, educational and professional life is assessed nowadays positively as well as critically. However,

regardless of the assessment of this phenomenon, it seems to be setting the direction of a new lifestyle.

Showing the phenomenon of digital nomadism as a key perspective of changes in the labour market is the goal and the key issue presented in this article. Analysis of changes in the sphere of work is the starting point for presenting the digital nomadism phenomenon. The topics of educational and professional aspirations of young people, issues of matching and professional suitability as well as models of contemporary careers are also taken up. The summary includes educational trends that are worth developing in the future, also as part of lifelong learning. The article presents a theoretical type of study. The aims and methodology of the cited research results are indicated in the parentheses.

Keywords: competencies, future of work, digital nomadism, employee, employer, labour market, lifelong learning, strategy, education

The even stronger need is arising at present to build bridges of high quality and adequacy between the area of education and the labour market and the space of employers in Poland¹. There have been numerous debates, either academic, political or social, dedicated to the determination of the scopes and levels of dependence between schools and the needs of the social-economic environment and between the specific conditions in which Polish schools (Pyżalski, 2020) operate and a profile of a young employee, in particular concerning his/her competences that will be useful in a job. Already in 2009 Śliwerski, indicated in Poland that:

the most important role of school in the 21st century will be to develop independence, activity, innovation, and different communication techniques. The man of 'global village' will work for a large part more independently than at present, but using the state-of-the-art information devices (p. 320).

Contemporary young people, who develop their own identity in the extremely variegated and heterogeneous reality of permanent changes,

1 This article contains selected aspects of the texts: (Christoph 2020a; 2020b).

at the times of crucial decisions that concern their educational-vocational future, have to exhibit a high level of independent thinking, activity, and responsibility as well as the ability to react flexibly and adaptively to expectations from the most essential stakeholders, such as, for example, their family, school, employers, consultants, and educators. The ability of young graduates to effectively enter the labour market and actively create their own professional future as well as to formulate important life objectives should underlie a profile of a graduate of a contemporary school. Solarczyk-Ambrozik (2013) stresses the need for the clear targeting of education at the labour market, stating that:

combining learning for the whole life with the needs of the labour market means, according to the most basic assumptions, higher chances of citizens for employment, ensuring the successful professional career, and the ease of moving between sectors, states as well as the greater mobility of employees, who move from work to education and from education to work during their whole life (p. 31).

In this topic, Pillay (1997) also indicates that:

The competitive nature of the modern industry and the need to cope with the changing technology compel employers to move employees between jobs, thus creating the need for 'cross skilling'. Cross skilling is providing workers with more diverse skills by breaking the traditional barriers between jobs. Workers are expected to have knowledge in a number of related domains. (...) Thus, to meet modern-day employer expectations, workers need to be cross skilled, be high on upskilling and have the capacity to engage in high-order thinking. This cocktail of abilities is a prized commodity among contemporary workers and is referred to as 'multi-skilling'. It is not just acquiring complex knowledge in a single domain or just acquiring skills from a number of specific domains. Multi-skilling is acquiring thinking skills together with a deep understanding of complex content knowledge, so increasing the versatility of one's knowledge and skill (chapter 10).

When analysing reports as well as scientific and specialist literature, one can conclude that the problems discussed in this article and concerning the situation of young people on the labour market and their ability to find their places, both with respect to expectations of employers and their own life plans, are definitely up-to-date and worth presenting. Especially if their

lifestyle is shaped in the culture of innovation, mental and physical mobility and is based on the principles of digital nomadism.

CHANGES IN THE AREA OF WORK

For more than three hundred years, Western thought has been dominated by industrialism, and mass education systems have been designed to form students according to specific requirements. This concept of linear/mechanical education is valid to this day, despite the fact that since 2011 the formula of the fourth industrial revolution (*Industrie 4.0 ...*, 2011) and the fifth-generation mobile technology (the so-called 5G) have become more common (Biała Księga, 2019). The new technological revolution means a combination of three independent elements: the real world of production machines, the virtual world, and information technology. In contrast to previous industrial revolutions, the current one is progressing much faster. It unites the digital and physical world and generates dynamic changes in the labour market; it also requires the preparation of the next generations of employees for full participation in it. It is predicted that in the near future, the work environment will be characterized by greater employee autonomy, fewer routine tasks and greater use of ICT. The increase in the area of social and intellectual tasks will be accompanied by a decrease in the number of people performing work that requires physical effort. In view of the changing needs of the labour market, workers will be expected to have new skills that are relevant to evolving needs. The motto that accompanies the forecasts about the future of work is the formula „Brain instead of muscles” (CEDEFOP, 2018). Empirical analysis of the needs of the future carried out by Infuture Hatałska Foresight Institute indicates that in the context of the developing Industry 4.0, both skills in the field of exact sciences, the so-called STEM (science, technology, engineering, math), as well as critical thinking, the ability to share knowledge or intergenerational communication will be important. STEM skills will be extremely useful, but it will be necessary to combine them with the so-called soft skills that distinguish humans from machines and artificial intelligence (Hatałska & Trapp, 2019, p. 26–30). As the authors of the mentioned analysis write: „Because soft skills are one of the few skills with which automation will not be able to fight (and it will not happen soon), they will be crucial for workers’ survival in the future labour market. As the pace of innovation increases, we must hold onto what is uniquely ours,

including the ability to understand human behaviour or to creatively solve problems to meet human needs” (Hatałska & Trapp, 2019, p. 31).

One can already observe that traditional work and online work are and will be interrelated in every field. We are facing the fall or the total lack of demand for certain professions and qualifications in Poland. There is the fast and dynamic change in the structure of employment, which is related to the phenomenon of flattening organizational structures and the reduction of jobs and positions for an indefinite term, protected with safety and stability by employers. An important category in the description of the transformation of work is its ‘non-continuity’, which is reflected in patterns of professional career paths. There are forms of employment that are full of risks. Frequent changes of jobs or even professions and modifications of the hierarchical structure of employment to temporary assignments to project teams prevent an employee from identifying with one’s performed work or from displaying loyalty towards a firm (Solarczyk-Ambrozik, 2018). This phenomenon explicitly determines the change of human mentality (Field, 2005) that refers to the departure from the obsolete and fossilised thinking about a lifelong job towards the focus on and openness to active and variable creation of one’s situation and an educational-professional future (Cybal-Michalska, 2013, p. 125, 135). Especially in the situation where the development of technologies, in particular digital ones, results in the growing complexity of work, which reduces the number of jobs that require medium qualifications. Hatałska (2016a) indicates, with respect to developed job scenarios in the future, that ‘a useless class’ is formed, that is a class of people with average competences and working capacities, which in fact are often ‘useless’ in the context of networked environments and professional relationships. Quoting from Hatałska (2016a) one may conclude that:

it is already visible that AI enters not only repeatable, arduous, and imitative jobs, in which a robot proves better than a human, but also creative jobs: it can compose music, write poems and film scripts, and take over competences of doctors and lawyers. It should not come as a surprise that, as a result, people are afraid of losing jobs in favour of AI technology and that there will be no work for them at all (p.19).

Therefore, facing the fast ageing of knowledge and competences, innovation and a flexible approach to the area of education and professions

become extremely important, with a clear focus on creative thinking and a high level of adaptability to variable environmental conditions. It is noteworthy here that the above-mentioned aspects should be developed in the current of the authentic development of a new approach and educational-professional identity of an individual, rather than just as a declarative show of the above-mentioned characteristics, which are often freely and intensely included in job applications and forms of employee assessment. Already in the 1990s (Solarczyk-Ambrozik, 2013, p. 13), at the time when markets began to open and information started to flow freely, people felt the need to learn and improve professionally all their lives, and this idea is seen as the main concept of education. Today, in 2021, this necessity is reflected in the multi-perspective idea of learning, in which one sees opportunities and possibilities for development and the achievement of consecutive stages of improvement in every sphere of human life: personal, social, educational, professional, and technological-economic, both locally and globally. The real openness and readiness to learn continually enable an individual to develop an ability, which is important from the perspective of the labour market and requirements of employers, to be employed for all one's life (employability), which certainly enhances one's attractiveness in and outside the professional zone (Solarczyk-Ambrozik, 2015). It is also worth emphasizing that employability does not involve positioning a learning and working person as a servant or instrument in the labour market. The question of employability is understood as the development of a sustainable bridge, in terms of requirements, offers, and capacities, between employees and an employer, and is based on dialogue and negotiations about what is most valuable for each party. From the perspective of an employee, planning and pursuing one's career is understood as the subjective property of an individual (Cybal-Michalska, 2013), whose fundamentals are the essential values of an individual and his/her self-realization paths. On the other hand, from the employer's perspective, it is essential to acquire the most talented and valuable employees, retain them in the organization and develop a high intellectual capital that gives development opportunities, in a broader than individual dimension, namely the development of a learning organization (Sitko-Lutek & Skrzypek, 2009, p. 74; Christoph, 2011).

REQUIREMENTS OF THE LABOUR MARKET – ABOUT THE PHENOMENON OF DIGITAL NOMADISM

Showing a broader perspective, it is worth quoting the three main priorities formulated in the *Strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. Europe 2020* (Brussels, 2010) related to the changes that Europe is experiencing and will face in the future. The strategy emphasizes the role of the lifelong learning process in strengthening Europe's economy and social cohesion. It contains three very important and interrelated priorities: development of an economy based on knowledge and innovation - smart growth; sustainable development - supporting the economy that uses resources more efficiently, a development that is friendly for the environment, and creating healthy competitiveness; inclusive growth, i.e. supporting a high-employment economy that delivers social and territorial cohesion. The strategy assumes that smart growth means increasing the role of knowledge and innovation as drivers of future development. Actions that must be taken include education, training and lifelong learning. This means that the EU Member States will have to ensure an adequate level of investment in training and education systems at all levels, improve – including key competencies – learning outcomes, increase the openness and relevance of education systems by creating a national qualifications structure and better link the education process with labour market needs. We are entering a new economy and a new world of work. Advances in robotics, communication, data collection (Big Data) and virtual digital platforms are undermining the sustainability of the pay-based social employment model. Automation processes are sweeping through the entire economy. Diversity and digitization cover all areas of life. Information technology touches the whole of reality (Rynkowska, 2017). Spreading of digital goods and services that can be produced and reproduced thanks to positive network effects and the victory of digital information as a strategic economic resource, as well as the massive increase in the amount of available information are the key drivers of change (Valenduc & Vendramin, 2016, p. 16–17).

‘Already now or in the near future, the labour market will be exposed to a digital tsunami. Digital technologies, both those we know and are becoming familiar with right now, and those that will only be invented in the future, will revolutionize the economy, change the way businesses and public institutions

operate and, first and foremost, will affect radically the labour market' (Rynkowska, 2017). This phenomenon brings numerous consequences, both for education and the labour market. In both areas, one can see two different approaches. On the one hand, a man may treat the development of technologies and their clear and decisive dominance on the market as a threat and a so-called end of the human labour market. On the other hand, they may be treated as a perspective and new opportunities, the development of areas that have been unknown before, which may bring about effects that are within the zone of educational and professional self-fulfilment of individuals. The progressing changes and challenges of the social and market environment very often result in a sense of loss among people, especially in the situation where an idea of life-long learning has been unknown and been only declared, but never practised. This is related to the phenomenon of labour intellectualization, which is expressed by the need of employing white-collar workers on every level and position in an organization. Due to the digitalization of labour, knowledge and specialist skills are needed now and will be needed in the future by employees in almost every job and in every activity. When analysing this question, the substantial role of education is recognised, as well as of any and all other forms of vocational development of persons, which, by following their mission, teach their recipients how to live effectively and how to maintain such an attitude throughout their life.

The new world of labour in the international digital economy is characterised by the fact that as a result of computerization and robotization, certain jobs and professions are disappearing, while other jobs come to being in various sectors, offering new products and services (Beck, 2002, p.208–221). The nature of work is changing, while new forms of employment are appearing together with new forms of interaction between an employee and a machine. The new nature of work is displayed, among others, in sharing an employee by several employers, acting as an expert during a project, work sharing by employees, mobile work using ICT (information and communication technology), portfolio work - that is self-employment and performing work for numerous customers, voucher work – which is a package of work purchased from an agency organization, call work – that is when an employer needs it, and crowd-working via a platform, where tasks are divided among different employees (Rynkowska, 2017). The need to develop flexible work of clearly non-continuous and fragmentary nature and performed in various contexts and environments is visibly developed among

employees in response to varied expectations of employers. Hatalska points this out in her report, defining one of her scenarios of future work as ‘people per hour’, which is the economy of service providers and the growing demand on the market for freelancers, independent experts who render services ‘just in time’ for employers who offer project or commission employment (Hatalska, 2016a). That requires an individual to display specific and desired professional skills, high self-reliance at work, developing professionally creative offers and services, and an entrepreneurial attitude, related to the skill of establishing and maintaining relationships with chief stakeholders of a sector, i.e. customers, co-workers, subcontractors, and suppliers. Before the year 2020, it was considered that the introduction of modern technologies in the Polish work environment is a long-term process. Based on the *Raport Gumtree 2017. Aktywni + Przyszłość rynku pracy*, one may indicate that ‘almost half of working Poles (48%) think that in the ten-year perspective, they will continue to work in the same job and carry out tasks similar to those at present. Every fifth working Pole (22%) believes that he/she will stay in their present job, but will carry out activities related to operating new technologies and/or programming machines. In total, seven out of ten Poles do not anticipate changing their profession. Another 16% of respondents admit an option to change a profession, but to one that will involve carrying out similar activities. Only one out of ten Poles (8%) admits an idea of changing their profession to one that will be related to using new technologies. A small percentage of Poles (6%) take into consideration an option to work on tasks related to new technologies, but not related to a specific job’ (Rynkowska, 2017). Notwithstanding the above, the digitalization of the economy, also in Poland, is in progress, and after 2020 we can say that it is our reality. This situation includes the necessity to adapt the organization of enterprises and institutions to the new, intellectualising, networked reality and overcoming resistance among people against unknown forms of work.

In the report of the *Working conditions in a global perspective* – a study conducted in 2019, the International Labour Organization indicates that Poland has a very low (less than 20%) percentage of remote workers in comparison to other countries. The leaders in this issue are countries such as Denmark, Netherlands, Sweden, USA. The approach to work remotely, both for employees and employers, is also of key importance. In Poland, until 2020, the so-called home office was often associated with fictional work, avoiding performing duties. The real potential of this form of employment for both

sides wasn't seen. Despite taking on more tasks, nomads can better maintain a balance between work and private life than stationary workers. Polish research focusing on remote work *The Remote Future. Remote labour market and employees' expectations. The Polish 2018 edition*, provides information that 1/3 of companies allow their employees to work remotely, 76% of employees use this opportunity once in a while. On the other hand, employees who do not have such a possibility would like to have it (over 50% of respondents). The same research shows that remote workers are more satisfied with their work than people who choose stationary work. The trend of the growing popularity of digital nomadism and remote work can be observed on the basis of the number of blogs, websites or social groups devoted to new mobile forms of employment. The first Polish blogs dedicated to digital nomads appeared in 2015 (www.cyfrowinomadzi.pl), which can be treated as the beginning of the phenomenon in Poland. Their attractiveness is constantly growing, as is the case with foreign websites, e.g. blog WebWorkTravel. The nomads associated there meet in the real world at numerous events, conferences, cruises or camps, where they meet similar people, share knowledge and experiences, learn new technological solutions or news related to travelling (Czerw, 2020). The MBO Partners Digital Nomadism: A Rising Trend report indicates that digital nomad professions are different. From copywriters, graphic designers, IT specialists, online business owners to virtual assistants, educators and psychologists helping at a distance. More and more people are opting for this wandering lifestyle not only because of the technology that allows it. There are many who closely observe changes in the labour market and try to react quickly. Thus, we have more and more opportunities to use coworking spaces. Digital nomads have more and more solutions to choose from. There are lists of cities offering space for remote work, e.g. Nomad List (<https://nomadlist.com/>), where there are already 9 Polish cities: Warsaw, Gdańsk, Kraków, Wrocław, Łódź, Lublin, Katowice, Szczecin and Poznań. Thanks to the development of services in this direction in just 15 years – in 2035, there will be almost a billion of them (Tabaka, 2019). This upward trend is also forecasted by the authors of the *Freelancers in Poland 2018* report prepared by the Useme.eu portal (Ilków, 2018).

One may conclude that the phenomenon of nomadism is growing in the social-economic life, which is characterised by the strong need for independence, being in the movement, non-stop travels, and the sense of personal freedom. At present, however, the sense of nomadism is applied

also to describe people who travel around a country or world, work remotely and live in many different places, often having no fixed address; hence the term ‘modern nomadism’ or ‘digital nomadism’ (Hatałska, 2016b). In her study entitled *Wędrowcy. Raport o współczesnych nomadach*, Hatałska points to several essential findings formulated based on the analysis of this style of life and work. Contemporary nomads are relatively young (88% of respondents were aged 25-44), but their sex is not a differentiating element (they included 51% male and 49% female respondents). Among nomads, however, there are also persons who are employed by one employer but work remotely from any place in the world. There are owners of start-ups and entrepreneurs among nomads. The most attractive type of work for digital nomads is self-employment, conducting one’s own business activity and freelancing - it was selected by 91% of respondents in total. Working in a job in an office was chosen by only 5% of respondents. As many as 83% of respondents who described themselves as digital nomads or leading this type of lifestyle declared that the most important value in their life was freedom. The second came independence, declared by 78% of respondents (Hatałska, 2016b, p.5). The declarations of digital nomads often show their individual and professional aspirations, without taking into account the social and cultural context. It is worth mentioning here that in contrast to the popular entrepreneurial literature giving a “freedom” perspective to the digital nomad lifestyle, Thompson (2018) provides critical insight on these issues. According to the author, while leisure and location are prioritized for hedonistic enjoyment for digital nomads, it costs them social isolation, distance from loved ones, and loneliness. For those nomads who seek constructed community in the expensive, all-inclusive communities such as co-living/co-working spaces, their lives can be likened to a “little soap bubble” being carried over to any location around the globe, without the context of the local population and culture. The quality of interpersonal relations remains low because the strong individualism and personal needs replace social aspirations to live in the local community. This approach has negative social consequences, but in the sphere of work and the digital economy, it seems to be an inevitable future.

When analysing the above issues, one may notice the strongly differentiated need for independence and freedom of individuals, manifested both in the field of education and professional work. Passion, travels, modern technologies, and free management of one’s own time become presently a synonym of an

‘individualised type of a project career’. One may use this term to refer to working for a selected professional project, in which a package of individual competences matches optimally the needs and tasks of a specific employer, while communication between the two entities is twofold, mostly remote, but also direct. This type is characterised by: having an attractive package of professional competences, independence and autonomy of a project contractor, with a strong emphasis on the simultaneous responsibility for effects, an independent choice of work tools and measures, self-motivation and a training-development tailor-made project shared with an employer. One may indicate that the more instability, ambiguity, multiple choices and solutions there are in this type, i.e. more factors which in the traditional forms of job employment are perceived as negative, the more creativity, real flexibility and targeted solutions that reflect actual needs of an employer/task are there. In this relationship, both partners, a contractor-employee and a client-employer, fulfil their objectives and meet their needs, while maintaining the autonomy of selected professional values and forms of work. A satisfying condition of action for an ‘individual in the project career type’ is the mental change of perceiving reality, which involves the conscious acceptance of the lack of continuity, security, repeatability and the narrow fulfilment of tasks in a job. The broad perspective, the freedom of choices, the individualization of the performance process, the possibility to move freely and the extraordinary creative force of actions are the characteristics of an employee of the future - a digital nomad or a project contractor.

Due to diversified educational spaces and changes in the area of work and career paths, the educational and professional aspirations of contemporary youths in Poland have changed. One can conclude that they keep growing proportionally to education and the awareness of the existence of the multi-dimensional professional perspective. Young people require a positive and realistic transfer in the line between knowledge and practical skills, which also in the opinion of employers should be strong, direct, measurable, flexible, and authentic. The reinforcement of pragmatic and demanding attitudes is observed among the youth (for example, being praised for even the tiniest effort), while the level of reflectivity and unselfish actions, e.g. voluntary work, active participation in non-obligatory educational meetings, thematic seminars or even meetings with representatives of the social-economic environment, is getting lower (but not disappearing completely). Moreover, the awareness of graduates of their own potential, value and essential

competencies condition their further educational-professional choices, while high aspirations in this respect are reflected in strong individualism, and definitely develop the need to introduce new methods in education, e.g. teaching self-reliance in comprehensive problem solution. Also, the requirements of graduates get bigger in relations with their employers, but not only. Young people look for ‘an attractive school and university’ and ‘an attractive employer’, which is reflected in the desire to quickly and technically fulfil consecutive educational tasks as well as to advance and develop professionally quickly at a workplace, according to the principle: fast effect, here and now, while the level of reflectivity and efforts targeted at building quality is low (Gmerek, 2001, p. 293).

Together with the common access to knowledge and information and the resulting change of an organizational structure, the hierarchy of ‘assets’ of a man changes as well. In a traditional organization, professional qualifications were the most important, and they determined the utility of an employee in an organization and his/her success. In a knowledge-based organization, in the global world of growing independence and individual freedom, non-professional skills get a special role, including personal and social skills. This concerns the personality of a human, that is his/her self-awareness, self-knowledge, and self-esteem. Secondly, the changeability of competences draws attention to the need for continuous education and professional improvement within the idea of further education (Claxton, 1999). Out of the most frequently distinguished sources of developing professional qualifications, we may mention experience gained at a workplace, information and guidelines received from other persons (e.g. superiors, co-workers, team coaches) and training (training that develops interpersonal skills get special importance in this respect). Bochniarz (2010) said, that:

it has always been known that the quality of life, competitiveness of enterprises and the pace of economic development are related to the quality of human capital: knowledge, attitudes and skills of people. In the knowledge civilization of the C21, this relationship is becoming more and more valid. For Poland, the quality, flexibility and availability of qualified employees, and not only low labour costs, will be a basic source of maintaining the dynamics of economic development. For enterprises unlocking the potential of knowledge, skills, and positive attitudes of people is the foundation for building a competitive advantage on the market. For every person, the adequately high level of education, combined with adult education, which is

adapted to the needs of the labour market, boosts clearly the chances for employment, the performance of high-quality work, and thus avoiding social exclusion, providing wealth, pursuing one's interests, aspirations and life objectives (p.7).

Competences gain strategic importance, both for an individual who is developing his/her educational-professional future and for employers themselves (Christoph, 2011, p.131–138).

With reference to the report *Analiza zapotrzebowania na kompetencje w gospodarce i na rynku pracy* (Jelonek, 2019, p. 40), it has to be pointed out that employers in Poland (the perspective of needs of employers was diagnosed at the turn of 2018 and 2019) look for candidates who represent the optimal (from the employer's perspective) combination of professional and social competences, which depends on a specific job. Respondents of quality studies¹ stressed that professional competences are essential in numerous courses and are a necessary, albeit insufficient condition for getting a job, because to keep a job one needs soft skills as well.

CONCLUSION

According to the *Human Capital Development Strategy 2020* (p. 47), school education should be the stage of life in which we acquire the most important knowledge and skills allowing for satisfactory and creative functioning in society and on the labour market. At the stage of life corresponding to school education, key attitudes towards oneself and other people are also formed. The educational system, due to its universality, is a natural mechanism that allows supporting the development of people with the greatest potential and, at the same time, gives the possibility of equalizing opportunities at an early stage of life. In contrast to many other countries, the challenge in Poland is no longer to expand participation in school education. This share is practically universal, and the low number of early school leavers makes Poland one of the leaders in this issue among the European Union countries. The quality of teaching and competences acquired by young people becomes a priority. The modern educational system is considered an important element of the knowledge society in which "learning" will be a permanent element of more or less "mobile" human biographies (Polska..., 2011, p. 45).

Contemporary young people on the labour market are suspended in the space of individual searches, between their own identity and diluted

points of reference, between certainty and relativity of meanings, between passion and the profitability of professional choices, between the directness of contacts and the faked digital reality. They are key stakeholders who create the new labour market, in which the daily change and diversity no longer constitute Toffler's '*shock of the future*' (Toffler, 2007). Education plays an exceptional and undeniable role in this, which is the only tool that can help us understand the surrounding world. Jarvis (2007) stressed that "as a result of globalisation and rapid social change, individuals have to keep on learning to feel at home in the world and this occurs in every aspect of daily living. Apart from the formal learning, there is also incidental and self-directed learning" (p. 140). Therefore, young people, at an early stage of adulthood, are often characterised by high openness to education, professional knowledge, and real learning from daily experiences. They are curious about the world and want to learn different possibilities of self-realization. Therefore, a question is asked in the dimension of systemic education: In what ranges should one study and learn, and in what directions should educational offers be created and developed?

While analysing bridges between the areas of education and expectations of employers, one can say that the most popular at present is the offer of education and training in supplementing professional qualifications, gaining new qualifications and raising competences, which will then bring concrete effects in the management of one's professional career. The so-called 'diploma mania', of having certificates, etc. still persists in Poland, while the employment reality fuels such aspirations by formulating bureaucratic requirements as to effects of work and its progress. As a result, there is a type of a learning collector, who gathers documents that are profitable and desired among contemporary employers, and focuses mostly on getting credit for material learnt, while expecting tangible benefits, rather than on the process of learning itself. It is worth investing in vocational education that is related to the labour market, which will fill in the deficits of experts in numerous sectors. In face of the dynamically changing reality, the fast pace of life and the immense production of information, it is certainly worth investing in programmes that educate young adults and those already actively working in the area of maintaining the work-professional life balance (Christoph, 2015; Tomaszewska-Lipiec, 2014). Presently, these two areas strongly interpenetrate, creating a situation where we are constantly at work (e.g. remote work from home), while we maintain our family life and personal development. Keeping

a suitable balance in such areas will raise the quality of educational activity of young adults. On the other hand, developing entrepreneurial attitudes in the young generation as well as career and talent management programmes seems to be another important area of education. An important element in this area is to change the way of perceiving an employment situation, which involves the systemic and holistic approach, rather than that resulting from an individual position.

Last but not least, a very important area of supporting education is school and its actors: teachers within the modern method of teaching and communicating in the ITC systems, and students within educational-professional consulting, because the right choices and educational decision reduce the number of life failures of individuals, while raising the quality of human capital developed for the needs of a state. Consulting is provided already on the level of a primary school, through vocational advice, up to academic consulting, as it introduces graduates effectively into the labour market. Schools on all levels will become modern centres of education that integrate employers and local communities, developing attitudes of participatory and innovative democracy as well as reinforcing the inter-generation social bonds. Innovation, quality, collaboration, entrepreneurship, and creativity - these are the main mottos of contemporary employers, which should be also associated with modern education and the phenomenon of digital nomadism.

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