

Settlement Type and Educational Effectiveness of Polish Schools on the Example of the Kujawsko-Pomorskie Voivodeship

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Abstract. The article presents and analyses data on the educational potential of schools in relation to settlement type in Poland. On the example of two types of schools – successful and requiring help – their distribution was shown in the Kujawsko-Pomorskie Voivodeship. For this purpose, data from the Educational Value Added (EVA) index for voivodeship schools were interpreted. On this basis, it was determined what type of school the branches represent, and then classification and analysis was made for the village/city and the number of inhabitants. The results show that the educational potential of rural schools is lower than that of schools in cities. The results were interpreted on the basis of theories of cultural reproduction, bearing in mind the importance of settlement type for the construction of cultural capital.

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1. Differences between village and city: the sociocultural perspective

Humans, as bio-sociocultural beings, are in a constant relation with their surroundings. They and their activities are an integral part of the space that they co-create, while also being subject to its influences. Space (including settlement type) is an important context in the study of socio-environmental processes, including educational ones. The school (as well as other institutions) is not an element of the environment that is detached from this context, but an integral component of it. The space in which the school is located can be significant for its functioning and for its educational effectiveness.

One of the basic classifications of the space occupied by humans is division by settlement type: village and city. This division is reflected both in the descriptive, sociocultural definitions of the city and the village, and in taking into account the social construction of space (Halfacree, 1993). According to M. Kielczewska-Zaleska, the decisive factors in the specificity and distinctiveness of the functioning of the rural (and thus also urban) population are economic phenomena that shape customs and traditions, i.e. culture. The most important factor shaping what is rural is the area of land with which agricultural production is associated (Szymańska, 2013). A rural economy is at its root an autarkic economy, meaning that practicality and preventiveness play an important role in how it functions (Szymańska, 2013).

Just as the village is largely connected with nature, the city is primarily a cultural creation (conditioned as it is also by geographical location, e.g., on a river, by the sea, in the mountains, etc.). D. Szymańska describes the city in the following terms: “it is the best creation of human civilization”; “the product of man, the embryo of his reason, work and will”; “the fullest and strongest realization of culture”; “an engine of progress”; “a place where mankind solves problems and where new problems constantly appear”; and “spiritual workshops of humanity, creative laboratories”. As Szymańska writes, “the city allows humanity to look into the future, it is a bridge to it; the city is also a place where resources for its development are created; the mission of the cities is to create an idea” (Szymańska,

2013; cf. Łappo, 1997). Due to the influx of people of various origins, it is a heterogeneous creation: sociologists define the city as “arbitrarily large [in the sense of the population – authors], densely populated, permanent settlement unit of socio-heterogeneous individuals” (Szymańska 2007).

However, it is impossible not to notice the changing function of villages and cities. And so, in the case of the village, the change results, among others, from a modernisation of the agricultural economy, the phenomena of urbanisation and gentrification, the servicisation of rural space, the professional variation and professionalisation of work in the countryside, changes in infrastructure, and tourist consumption of rural space (Wójcik, 2011). In turn, cities are struggling with social, economic and ecological problems, which results, among others, in the processes of urbanisation of suburban areas, the spatial decentralisation of the population and of business entities, and, as a consequence, social segregation (Lisowski, 2009).

Of further importance is the social construction of the significance of village and city. The perception of the village, as Wójcik writes, is burdened with deeply rooted stereotypes (2011). The village is imagined as a backward environment, tied to patriarchal rules, unable to keep up with socio-economic modernisation, its inhabitants uneducated and lacking occupational aspirations (Halfacree 2009, cited in Wójcik 2011). The city, in contrast, is the centre of innovation, economic growth – a cultural, scientific, and tourist hub with a rich infrastructure (Tobiasz-Lis, 2010). The functioning of such stereotypes (especially in relation to villages) is an important cognitive barrier, which may also result in the appearance of a stereotype threat (Steele, Aronson, 1994) and cause attitudes and behaviours to modify to be consistent with the stereotype (Macrae, Stan-gor, Hewstone, 1999).

Differences between the village and the city can also be interpreted from a cultural perspective. Culture in a society/community is treated as a determinant and predictor of that society/community's development. It can fundamentally facilitate or prevent change being introduced into any group. As the core of culture, cultural values count in the process of development of both individuals and societies. They affect the way individuals think about progress (Chomczyńska-Rubacha, Rubacha, 2016).

In this context, it is worth looking at an analysis that distinguishes between the value, attitude and mentality types that differ between progressive cultures and conservative cultures. Education is important as an indicator of human capital, correlating with future success. In progressive cultures, education is the foundation of development; in a conservative context, it is considered marginal and elitist (Harrison, 2003).

The relative persistence of cultural differences between the countryside and the city can also be interpreted from the point of view of cultural reproduction theory. According to Anthony Giddens's theory of structuration, people create societies, but they do not do so haphazardly – they must obey the rules. They decide which specific rules are applied, but also whether those rules are subject to change. Structural qualities of the social world are simultaneously the result of human actions and a means by which they are made possible (Giddens, 2003). According to the theory of structuration, actors reproduce structural properties while at the same time recreating the conditions that allow a given action to take place. They are aware of what they are doing, but they are not necessarily able to predict all of the consequences of their actions (Giddens, 2003). This would explain the relative durability of cultural differences between rural and urban areas, despite actual changes and deliberate efforts (especially educational ones) aimed at eliminating cultural distance.

2. Settlement type and educational inequalities in Poland

According to sociological reports, people in Poland “differ not only in their place in the social structure and related income, professional qualifications, housing standards, diet, health, access to education, participation in culture, or similar features, but also in attitudes and views on religion, politics, the state, the church, the economy, the European Union, etc., etc.” (Kojder, 2007). One extremely durable social division is based on one's place of residence: city or village. This difference has multiple consequences in the various spheres of social functioning. De-

spite the processes of globalisation and European integration, we are still lagging behind in development. For many people, barriers related to new economic, political and educational phenomena cannot be overcome. This differentiation is routinely reproduced by transmitting values and schemes functioning in the immediate environment, as well as the daily opportunity to utilise the resources provided by this environment. Location, understood as the space in which a person functions, together with the institutions responsible for his or her education and upbringing – contains all forms of social and economic capital available in a given environment, along with behavioural patterns, values, rituals, levels of education, and institutions supporting order and general development. According to P. Bourdieu and J.-C. Passeron, pedagogical activities responding to the material and symbolic interests of groups or classes aim at recreating the distribution structure of cultural capital between groups or classes, contributing simultaneously to the reproduction of the social structure (Bourdieu, Passeron, 2006). Pedagogical activities are a type of symbolic violence, because they impose and implement certain meanings, treating them as worthy of replication and reproducing arbitrary selections made by a certain group (Bourdieu, Passeron, 2006). For this reason, instead of equalising educational opportunities, the school crystallises existing social inequalities.

Aspects of stratification in Poland were analysed on a large scale and over many years by the sociological school in Toruń, under the supervision of Z. Kwiecieński and R. Borowicz. In their research, particular attention was paid to the level of students' knowledge in relation to the school environment. Researchers found a statistically significant relationship between the location of the school and pupils' level of knowledge, with a lower level of knowledge more frequent among students in rural schools. The school's level of functioning, according to the researchers, depended both on its location and on the parents' level of education. School selection in this case only deepened the influence of the environment (Kwiecieński 1973). Subsequent research carried out several years later only confirmed the differences between the outcomes of students from rural and urban schools (Kwiecieński 1995).

The city–village distinction is extremely durable and has multiple consequences in various spheres of

social functioning. Educational barriers are particularly disturbing. As A. Kojder (2007) wrote: “Educational opportunities for the youth take on a caste character. Less than 5% of children of uneducated parents receive higher education, while in families where even one parent has higher education, ten times more children finish higher education.” More recent studies also confirm the relationship between education and location. Statistically better results on external examinations can be seen in those regions of the country where local governments devote more money to education and where there is less unemployment (Gofron 2010). However, the *Social Diagnosis 2015* report also points to differences in the use of educational services in cities and villages, which are most pronounced in relation to pre-school (and nursery) education and in relation to people over 20 (Grabowska, Kotowska, Panek, 2015). As regards pre-school (and nursery) education, the availability of these services has increased over the past 15 years, irrespective of location, which does not change the fact that 36–50% of children living in cities attend a nursery or kindergarten (depending on the size of the city), and in rural areas, only 29% (Grabowska, Kotowska, Panek, 2015). Meanwhile, in the 20–24 demographic, 50–78% of respondents from cities (depending on the size of the city) have access to education, compared to 44% of respondents from rural areas (Grabowska, Kotowska, Panek, 2015).

The school not only grounds itself in and “absorbs” the dominant culture in society, but also develops its own culture, which includes specific taboos, the way of life of the organisation’s participants, a certain order and discipline. It reflects both the norms and values of the formal system, as well as their reinterpretation in the informal system (Schulz, 1980).

Thus, at school, on the one hand, the culture of a given society and its subcultures is transferred and reproduced, and the culture of the education system of a given society is also created and transmitted, as well as a unique system of values and norms of a given institution. The latter culture conditions and also creates conditions for the process of implementing in school not only the function of a reconstructive culture but also an innovative one. (Przyborowska, 2013)

Over the years, substantial social efforts – for example, on the part of local governments, or through EU programmes meant to equalise the chances of an educational “good start” – as well as efforts by schools themselves, have been directed toward eliminating the inequalities discussed above. However, it remains to be determined whether these undertakings have been successful or whether location continues to play a decisive role in creating significant differences in terms of social capital and, consequently, opportunities for development. For this reason, the aim of the research presented in this paper is to assess the educational potential of schools based on the type of settlement in the selected voivodeship in Poland. The results of this type of research have social significance because they can be used in evaluating prior efforts concerning the mitigation of social and educational inequality between urban and rural environments and to design changes in this area.

3. Data and Research Methods

In this article we present the results of research addressing the following question: Based on settlement type (village/city), what is the educational potential of schools in the Kujawsko-Pomorskie Voivodeship in Poland? The Educational Value Added Index (EVA) (1) was adopted as an indicator of educational potential, which allowed the following school types to be distinguished: neutral, supportive, successful, requiring help, and unexploited opportunities. The research method involved finding and examining sources. The source was data collected by the researchers of the Educational Value Added Team at Instytut Badań Edukacyjnych [Educational Research Institute] retrieved from the database on the website: <http://ewd.edu.pl/>. The data concerning the results of external examinations at various educational levels are presented here in the form of charts. The analysis focuses on the two most extreme school types in terms of educational potential: successful schools and schools requiring assistance. As a result, the following research question was specified: What is the distribution of successful schools and schools requiring assistance based on type of settlement? In spite of the imper-

fections of the city–village distinction (Dymitrow, Brauer, 2016), a classic division was used, based on administrative and legal criteria.

The research was carried out in Poland and the results presented in this paper concern the Kujawsko-Pomorskie Voivodeship. The voivodeship is located in central-northern Poland, between several important urban centres (Gdańsk, Poznań, Łódź and Warsaw). It consists of 71 cities, including 4 cities with county rights and 19 county cities. The area of the voivodeship is 17,972 km², with a population of 2,084,524 inhabitants, of whom 504,189 are of educational age (3–24 years). Data of the National Census showed that 14.8% of the population has a university degree, 2.4% post-secondary education, 11.5% general secondary education, and 17.1% secondary vocational education. (2).

The EVA index indicates the increase in students' knowledge, assessed on the basis of a comparison of the results of external examinations ending a given educational stage. The index takes into account the initial status of students' achievements, assuming that the result of the external exam completing a given stage at a lower educational level is a general measure of educational potential, which in the next step is the predictor of the result of the external exam completing the next educational stage. The result of the exam obtained by the student is related to the expected value, resulting in an estimate of the added value at a given level of education (Dolata, 2007). Theoretically, every student and every school has an equal chance of finding themselves in a high position on the EVA scale, because what counts are not the results of the exam themselves, but rather the students' progress at the specific level of education (in this case, junior high schools pupils aged 13–16).

For each particular student, the added value is the difference between the expected and the real results of the exam. Meanwhile, the EVA of the school is the students' average EVA. Based on the results,

Table 1. Kujawsko-Pomorskie Voivodeship. Education compared to place of residence

Education	Village	City
	%	%
Higher	8.8	18.6
Secondary and vocational	24.6	35.2

Source: http://www.polskawliczbach.pl/kujawsko_pomorskie (2017.09.05)

institutions are divided into the types indicated in Table 2. (3)

The present article analyses schools located at the extremes of the EVA charts: successful schools and those requiring assistance. Successful schools are those located in the upper right corner of the EVA charts (see Fig. 1) They stand out from other institutions on the basis of particular results and a high added value. Therefore, they have both high scores and high effectiveness. It can therefore be said that these schools create opportunities to raise the educational potential of their pupils, at the same time generating new opportunities for their development. These branches usually maintain their position on the chart over successive years. This is particularly the case when there are no doubts as to the school's affiliation with the type indicated, and both the result and the value of EVA are very high (see Fig. 1). Complementary research conducted by the EVA team also showed a positive relationship between high EVA scores and a rapid development of students' intelligence (4).

Schools requiring help are in a different situation (see Fig. 2), in that they are characterised not only by low exam scores, but also by low educational effectiveness. These schools often have low scores for many years, which may be a signal for these institutions to implement activities aimed at improving the quality of teaching. Unfortunately, schools at the bottom of the EVA scale are most often characterised by low scores in other combinations, marginal success, and low motivation for students to engage in self-developmental activities. Thus, it can be concluded that the potential available at the beginning of education in these schools falls over time. Figure 3 shows the distribution of the results for all the schools in the voivodeship. In the upper right section there are successful schools, in the middle are neutral schools, and in the left lower section, schools requiring help. The chart shows the axis along which the results of the schools are distributed; in this case, it is a linear arrangement.

There are 330 schools in the EVA database for the Kujawsko-Pomorskie Voivodeship. Charts related to all of them were analysed in terms of the Educational Value Added Index, as well as each school's overall exam result (compared to the result achieved by the national student population in a given grade). On this basis, selections were made for schools lo-

Table 2. School type based on the EVA index

School type	Description
Neutral schools	Average scores + average effectiveness
Supportive schools	Low scores + high effectiveness
Successful schools	High scores + high effectiveness
Schools requiring help	Low scores + low effectiveness
Schools with unexploited opportunities	High scores + low effectiveness

Source: Own analysis based on materials available on the official EVA webpage: www.ewd.edu.pl (2017.09.05)

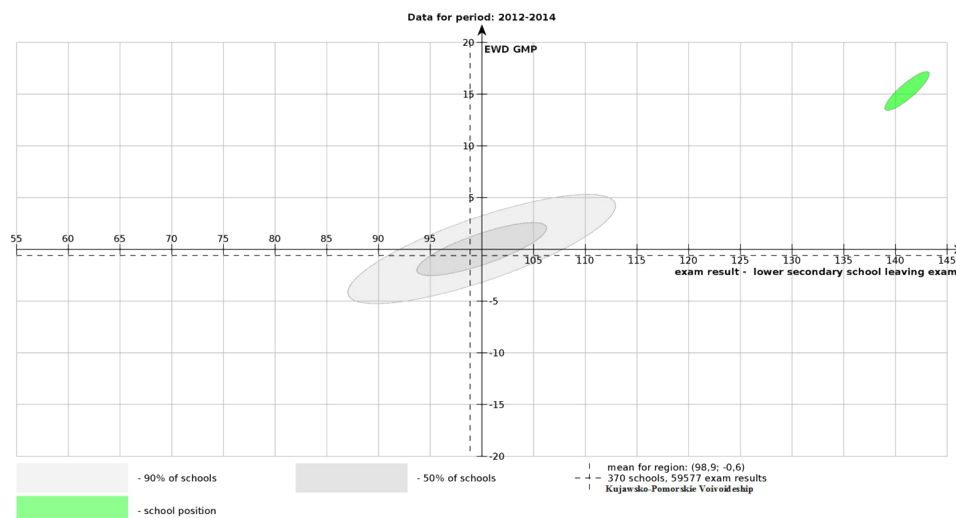


Fig. 1. Toruń County, 2012–2014, results for math and biological sciences. Explanation: EWD GMP – EVA (results for math and biological sciences), Kujawsko-Pomorskie Voivodeship school position – school position successful school (number of exam takers whose scores were included in the analysis: 125)

Source: <http://ewd.edu.pl/wskazniki/gimnazjum/porownywarka-szkol/> (10.01.2018)

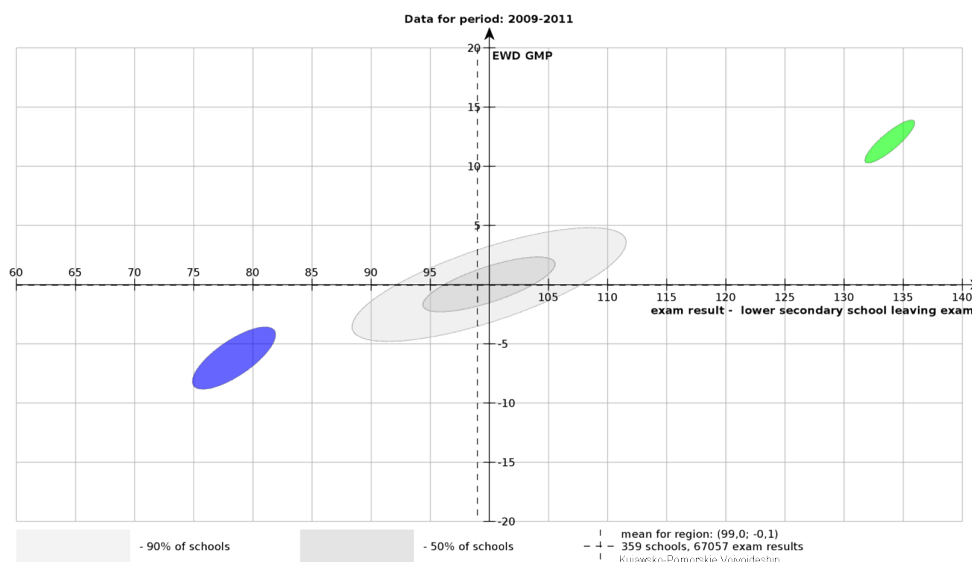


Fig. 2. Successful school (right) and school requiring help (left) opposite each other in the figure. Toruń County, three-year index (2009–2011). Explanation: EWD GMP – EVA (results for math and biological sciences exam) Kujawsko-Pomorskie Voivodeship

Source: <http://ewd.edu.pl/wskazniki/gimnazjum/porownywarka-szkol/> (10.01.2018)

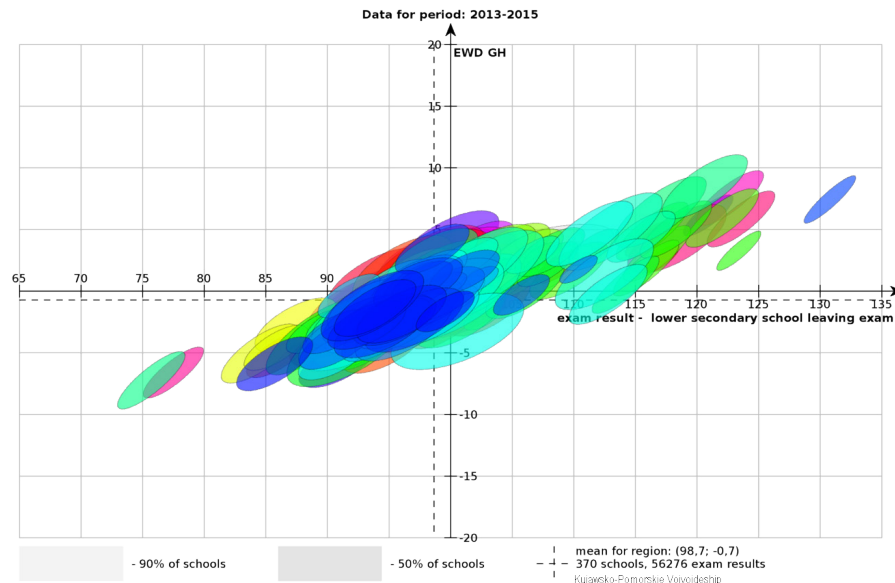


Fig. 3. Three-year EVA Index (2013–2015) on middle-school humanities exams, Kujawsko-Pomorskie Voivodeship. Explanation: EWD GH – EVA (results for humanities exam) Kujawsko-Pomorskie Voivodeship
Source: <http://ewd.edu.pl/wskazniki/gimnazjum/porownywarka-szkol/> (10.01.2018)

cated at the extremes (successful schools and school requiring help). In the end, all of the voivodeship's successful schools (24), as well as all schools requiring help (63), qualified for the study. As a result, schools were selected using a non-probability-theoretical sampling procedure.

4. Results

The results presented here concern the relationship between the school's location (village, city) and its type (success, requiring assistance), thus showing the relationship between each institution's educational potential and the type of settlement within which it operates.

The data presented in Fig. 4 show that all of the successful schools, that is, those with high results and effectiveness, were located in cities. It follows that no rural school in the voivodeship in the indicated period showed either positive educational potential or high exam scores. Most of the successful schools (Fig. 5) are located in the largest cities of the voivodeship, namely Bydgoszcz, Toruń, and Włocławek. Thus, we can clearly distinguish a basic principle, from which it follows that the high EVA result is associated with loca-

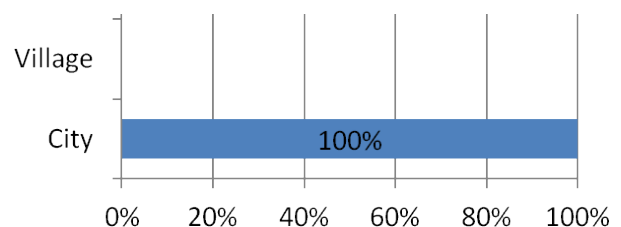


Fig. 4. Successful schools by location
Source: Own analysis based on www.ewd.edu.pl (12.01.2018)

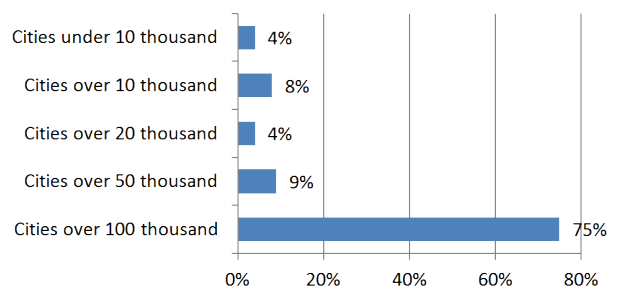


Fig. 5. Successful schools by number of inhabitants.
Source: Own analysis based on www.ewd.edu.pl (12.01.2018)

tion in an important urban agglomeration in which there are schools, universities, cultural institutions, workplaces and other institutions. In addition, municipal schools often compete for students, which happens through the rivalry for place in the ranking and through exam results, in turn affecting the general opinion about the school. Second place in terms of the number of high-potential outlets was

taken by cities with more than 50,000 inhabitants – in other words, by large cities.

Schools requiring assistance (Fig. 6), which constitute the largest percentage among the cities of the voivodeship – and the country, are located both in cities and in villages. Interestingly, the results reflect a degree of urbanisation proportional to the occurrence of schools requiring assistance in cities and in the countryside (5).

Data analysis (Fig. 7) shows that as many as 50% of all the schools requiring assistance are located in villages and small towns. There are also such schools in large cities, but there they constitute a smaller percentage of all the institutions. Successful schools are located mainly in the largest cities of the voivodeship (Toruń, Bydgoszcz), while schools requiring assistance also appear where there are no success schools – that is, in smaller counties and small municipalities.

5. Conclusions and discussion

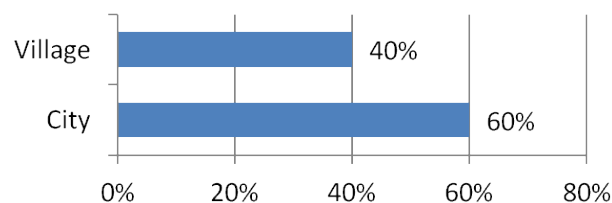


Fig. 6. Schools requiring help by location

Source: Own analysis based on www.ewd.edu.pl (13.01.2018)

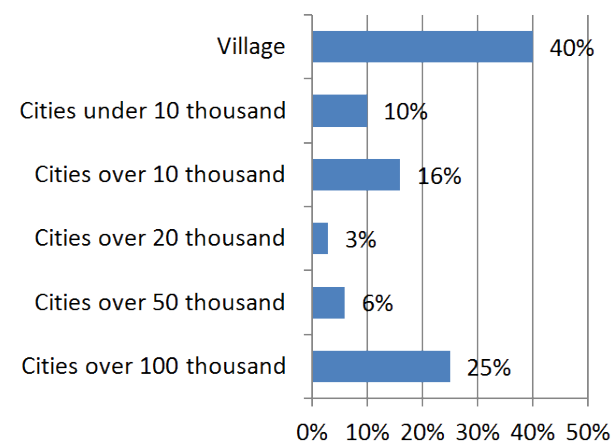


Fig. 7. Schools requiring help by number of inhabitants

Source: Own analysis based on www.ewd.edu.pl (13.01.2018)

Although the majority of schools with the highest educational potential (those showing both high effectiveness and results) are located in the largest cities of the voivodeship, on the basis of the analysed data it is difficult to make unequivocal conclusions about the indisputable high cultural capital of large cities in relation to level of education. The educational potential of municipal schools may depend on the specificity of a given city and the location of schools, but also on the part of the city in which the school operates (see results of research conducted in schools in London: Gibbons, Telhaj, 2007). The spatial segregation of cities affects the social structure of schools, which is particularly evident in the case of state schools that encompass compulsory education (including middle schools analysed in the present article). These schools have designated districts, which means that in practice they are obliged to accept children residing in a given district. Both the cultural capital and the economic conditions of the families from which students come to a particular school are not without their significance in affecting how a school functions. Analysis of the data showed that, in cities where the unemployment rate is relatively low (relative to the entire voivodeship), we find the most successful schools, while cities and regions with high unemployment (e.g., Lipno and its vicinity) include more schools requiring assistance (6).

An important result of the research presented in this article is that none of the numerous rural schools located in the voivodeship obtained a positive result on the EVA chart, which may indicate that the activities of these institutions are ineffective. However, it should be emphasised that the “objectivity” of the EVA index may be debatable and it should not be treated as an exclusive and reliable method of assessing the quality of school work (Żółtek, 2015). Still, this does not change the fact that the EVA index allows for broad macro-analyses.

Despite a growing awareness of the validity of education, and of very high societal levels of scholarship, media development and access to knowledge, rural schools continue to perform much worse than urban ones. This may indicate the importance of space for the capabilities and effectiveness of educational institutions.

Settlement type determines the construction of cultural capital. Cultural capital, in turn, determines the formation of the attitudes and behaviours of community members. Community members may modify their existing living conditions (settlement), which may contribute to progressive or regressive changes in the field of cultural capital. It seems, however, that the modification process encounters a high inertia of existing geographical and cultural conditions, and, despite visible external changes (urbanisation, commercialisation, industrialisation), in terms of the effectiveness of education, the division between city and village is quite impervious.

It is difficult to explain unequivocally the persisting differences in the effectiveness of education between the city and the countryside despite the significant systemic changes that have occurred in Poland over the last several decades. Based on the aforementioned theoretical premises it can be assumed with a large degree of probability that the approximation of space (development of public and private transport) and information (satellite TV, internet) is not accompanied to the same extent by cultural approximation. The cultural differences between the city and the countryside are more important in the education process than the systemic similarities are. This can be interpreted in the context of Anthony Giddens's theory of structuration. Reproduction of structural qualities of the social world does not allow significant changes, despite intentional efforts (Giddens, 2003). It is also likely to claim that culture as a phenomenon embedded in geographical space and traditions (which are very closely related to each other) is the basis of resistance to changes in education (see: Szymańska, 2013; Schulz, 1980). This would mean that all attempts to implement systemic changes should be accompanied by a well-thought-out strategy of cultural change.

On the other hand, it is worth noting that in Poland it is necessary to also change the approach to closing the gap in terms of school effectiveness. It is important to treat "school as a dynamic system – full of various connections and conditions, not a static relationship," (Nowosad, 2017). This approach draws attention to the need to introduce comprehensive mechanisms oriented to the quality and effectiveness of educational processes at various levels of the system: macro-, meso- and micro-. Educa-

tional changes should ultimately improve the school achievements of all students, regardless of location, and reduce the distance between the weakest and the best. These are key aspects of reforms in highly developed countries. Unfortunately, the reform of the educational system that has been being introduced in Poland since 2017 has not been based on experience and research from other countries. The changes that are being introduced have been focusing on school structure, and marginalising issues of the quality and efficiency of education, as well as the culture of the system (Harrison, 2003). Improving the quality of school work (understood here as improving the entire education system) is not possible without taking into account changes in the culture of the education system and individual schools.

Notes

1. The EVA index is a set of statistical techniques that measure a school's contribution to learning outcomes, taking into account the increase in students' knowledge as a result of a given educational process. Importantly, the EVA results show that the increase in a student's knowledge is more important than the level of knowledge, which is often associated with the background and its capital. EVA analysis can be successfully used in many educational studies, especially those aimed at improving the quality of work at school. The EVA encourages discussion of the diagnosis of quality of education and work of educational institutions; moreover, it is constantly being improved.

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