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## Educational Projects in Nowa Sól District

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Problemy Profesjologii nr 2, 123-131

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2014

Artykuł został opracowany do udostępnienia w internecie przez Muzeum Historii Polski w ramach prac podejmowanych na rzecz zapewnienia otwartego, powszechnego i trwałego dostępu do polskiego dorobku naukowego i kulturalnego. Artykuł jest umieszczony w kolekcji cyfrowej [bazhum.muzhp.pl](http://bazhum.muzhp.pl), gromadzącej zawartość polskich czasopism humanistycznych i społecznych.

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**Bożena Bogucka**

## **EDUCATIONAL PROJECTS IN NOWA SÓL DISTRICT**

### **Abstract**

Aim of his article is to present the Project „New qualifications – more certain future of Nowa Sól district residents” co-financed from European Union funds from European Social Fund of Operational Programme Human Resources Development 2007-2013, Priority VIII – regional economy personnel, that was implemented as an answer to the needs of Nowa Sól district residents regarding acquiring new, completing or improving qualifications and professional skills through courses and trainings undertaken on their own initiative by working adults.

### **PROJEKTY EDUKACYJNE W POWIECIE NOWOSOLSKIM**

#### **Streszczenie**

Celem niniejszego artykułu będzie przedstawienie projektu „Nowe kwalifikacje – pewniejsza przyszłość mieszkańców Powiatu Nowosolskiego” współfinansowanego ze środków Unii Europejskiej z Europejskiego Funduszu Społecznego Programu Operacyjnego Kapitał Ludzki 2007-2013, Priorytet VIII – Regionalne kadry gospodarki, który był realizowany w odpowiedzi na zapotrzebowanie mieszkańców Powiatu Nowosolskiego odnośnie nabywania nowych, uzupełniania lub podwyższania swoich kwalifikacji i umiejętności zawodowych poprzez kursy i szkolenia podejmowane z własnej inicjatywy przez pracujące osoby dorosłe.

Professional education reform introduced new opportunities of educating adults, in the form of courses and various kinds of trainings „enabling obtaining and completing knowledge, skills and professional qualifications”<sup>1</sup>. Under these assumptions obtaining professional qualifications, completing and improving them, can take place through selected forms of education.

Changes in the system of continuing education are the consequence of European Union Directives and especially bulletin „Educating adults. It is never too late to learn”, the authors of his document emphasise the importance of continuing education and its meaning for

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<sup>1</sup> Minister of Education Ordinance of 11 January 2012 page 2.

development „social, individual and employability”<sup>2</sup>. The importance of continuing education and its influence on the development of European civilization was already appreciated by J. Delors in his report entitled „Education. The treasure is hidden within”.

It is recalled that continuing education idea was already specified 27 years ago by Wincenty Okoń, who defines it as: „a process of continuous improving general and professional qualifications, according to which education is lifelong, includes renewing, extending and deepening human’s general and professional qualifications”<sup>3</sup>. Continuing education was defined Similarly in „Memorandum on continuing education” as „comprehensive education undertaken continuously in order to enrich knowledge, improve skills and raise qualifications”<sup>4</sup>.

This type of developing own personality and professional qualifications manner, as a result of economy, social and educational changes, became a requirement of our times deciding about personal development and career path and competitiveness on difficult work market. And it must be noticed that it also determines competitiveness of an individual on work market and occupational qualifications. Employers and shrinking work market force continuous improvement and striving at professional development, which is characteristic for organisations managed in a modern way: „Continuing education of adults, first of all with reference to working adults, is becoming not only a privilege that should be available for numerous masses of citizens but first and foremost a necessity enabling both appropriate performance of continually changing professional tasks but also professional development and promotion of individuals”<sup>5</sup>.

Continuing education in our times is not only investing in specific professional qualifications desired by an employer but first of all investment in personal competences and as varied as possible. No wonder that educating adults in out-formal forms becomes contemporarily a necessity because of changing work market, employers’ needs and development of modern technologies. Educating and improving own professional qualifications and obtaining new authorisations and enlarging their range becomes a condition of keeping workplace. GUS studies results, Educating adults, confirm and show that most frequently in informal education that is courses and trainings, working people take part who improve their professional qualifications due to „necessity of constant supplementing own knowledge and adjusting to requirements of workplace”<sup>6</sup>. Thus adults, as employees,

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<sup>2</sup> Commission Notification Educating adults: *It is never too late to learn*, Brussels, dated 23.10.2006, KOM(2006)614 final version, electronic document, publisher: Luxemburg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities.[ available online: on 17 April 2014].

<sup>3</sup> W. Okoń, *Pedagogic dictionary*, Warsaw: PWN, Warsaw 1987, page 149.

<sup>4</sup> *Memorandum on continuing education*, Commission of the European Committee, Brussels 30.10.2000 SEC(2000)1832, [www.sdsiz.pl](http://www.sdsiz.pl), [ available online: on 21 April 2014].

<sup>5</sup> R. Gerlach, *Workplace as learning organisation in „Enterprise in Employees professional development*, scientific editor Stefan M. Kwiatkowski, IBE, Warsaw 2007, page 62.

<sup>6</sup> *Educating adults 2011*, GUS, [http://www.stat.gov.pl/cps/rde/xbcr/gus/ED\\_ksztalcenie\\_doroslych\\_2011\\_pdf](http://www.stat.gov.pl/cps/rde/xbcr/gus/ED_ksztalcenie_doroslych_2011_pdf), [available online: on 20 April].

undertaking educational activity come back to informal forms of education first of all due to need of keeping workplace as competent employees. Motivation becomes „life situation creating the need to obtain new knowledge”<sup>7</sup>.

Man is the most crucial of company's resource therefore soft skills decide firstly all about his usefulness and competitiveness, „modern employee will have to have the whole set of so called soft skills without which keeping work will be extremely difficult. Flexibility and willingness to learn are basic features of employee of the future since in XXI century employee will be required to use efficiently all technical achievements and possess skills in interpersonal communication”<sup>8</sup>.

Opportunity for continuing education development is European Social Fund that created conditions for financing trainings and courses, improving occupational qualifications of employees as part of educational projects.

Good practice of using means from European Social Fund was the project „New qualifications-more certain future of Nowa Sól district residents” realized in Nowa Sól district in which 570 working district residents took part.

Nowa Sól district was created in 1999 as part of administrative reform. Its seat is the town of Nowa Sól in lubuskie province. Unemployment in the commune is: 27,6% (January 2010). Nowosolski commune has a population of 87 500 residents, of which 51,4% are women, and 64,2% are people in productive age of very varied level of education. Analysing the employment structure in individual communes of the district, it can easily be noticed that among the working, the biggest share have the inhabitants of Nowa Sól, as much as 71,8% of the total number of inhabitants from the area of the district. Employment arrangement in the remaining communes does not exceed 5%, except commune Koźuchów where his rate is 10.8% of residents. Therefore it was so important to increase professional qualifications of working residents of Nowa Sól district through participation in the project „New qualifications-more certain future of Nowa Sól district residents” Operational Programme Human Resources Development is one of the programmes introduced between 2007-2013. Means for its implementation come from European Social Fund and finance actions of EU member states on two grounds of counteracting unemployment and human resources development.

The aim of POKL is to enable in full use of human resources potential. 11 429 million Euro from European Social Fund was allocated for its implementation. Operational Programme Human Resources Development fits into National Strategic Reference Framework 2007-2013, and specially into second horizontal aim – „Improvement of human resources quality and increasing social cohesion”, Strategic aim set in NSRO corresponds to assumptions of Lisbon Strategies and is included in defined in Community Strategic Guidelines, priority 1.3,

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<sup>7</sup> M.S. Knowles, Elwood F. Holton III, Richard A. Swanson, *Adults education*, Polish Scientific Publishers PWN, Warsaw 2009, page 178.

<sup>8</sup> Scientific editor: B. Matusiak, *Foresight contemporary economy frame*, PARP, Warsaw 2009, page 149.

concerning increasing the number and improving work places quality. Additionally, the aim complies with recommendations concerning human resources development that are emphasised by guidelines in Community Strategic Guidelines for increasing professional activity and raising the level of employment (1.3.1), increasing employees' and companies' adaptive skills and work market flexibility (1.3.2), and also increasing investments in human resources through better education and improving qualifications (1.3.3). It is consistent with directives SWW „no 1.3.3”<sup>9</sup>.

One of the most crucial aims is to reduce the number of people for who the main obstacle in entering the work market or remaining on it is the lack of appropriate education and professional qualifications. Those guidelines correspond to Development Strategy of Lubuskie Province until 2020 and also: their strategic aim „1.3 Raising education quality and adjusting it to the needs of regional work market”<sup>10</sup> and operational aim 1.2: „Initiative development and increasing professional activity”.<sup>11</sup>

Strategic document on the district level that highlights the importance of in-service training and education, however, does not mention continuing education directly, is Nowa Sól District Development Plan for years 2008-2011,<sup>12</sup> in which one of the main tasks is conducting educational policy favouring developing professional aspirations of residents, ensuring education enabling finding oneself on difficult Nowa Sól work market.

From strategic documents analysis results that investing in society based on knowledge is an investment not only in human and social resources but also, and perhaps first of all, in economic development.

It is recalled that in educational structure of Nowa Sól district there are no separate educational establishments delegated to educating adults through courses and trainings so their competences until September 2012 had been fulfilled by District Educational Centre in Nowa Sól.

In Nowa Sól district there are 6722 registered business entities, of which 94% are entities employing up to 9 people. Businessmen employing from 10 to 49 employees are 5%. However, what needs to be pointed out, only 1% of workplaces employ from 50 to 249 employees. Share in work market of companies employing over 249 employees are only 0,1% of local employers<sup>13</sup>, situated first of all in Nowa Sól industrial zone.

Work market demands from employees flexibility and possessing appropriate qualifications, useful in performing work duties. In many economy sectors additional skills are getting more and more meaning. Among features that are preferred by employers when choosing an employee those are the ones that have crucial meaning, as pointed 72,4% of

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<sup>9</sup> *National Strategic Reference Framework 2007-2013*, Ministry of Regional Development Warsaw 2007 page 44.

<sup>10</sup> *Strategy of Lubuskie Province Development 2020*, Zielona Góra 2012, page 33.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibidem*, page 34.

<sup>12</sup> *Nowosolski District Development Plan for 2009-2011*, Nowa Sól 2008, [available online: on 22 April].

<sup>13</sup> *Nowosolski District employers study report*, Cracow 2010, page 5.

studied employers in Nowa Sól district<sup>14</sup>. And their lack is one of those features that decides on dismissing an employee, this factor was indicated by as many as 32,6% employers<sup>15</sup>. Supplementing and raising qualifications by an employee is an important asset of his/her attractiveness on work market. Command of foreign languages and soft skills are not and added value today but a necessity. It is confirmed by studies conducted within Human Resources Balance by Polish Agency for Enterprise Development<sup>16</sup>

Project entitled „New qualifications – more certain future of Nowa Sól district residents” co-financed from European Union funds from European Social Fund of Operational Programme Human Resources Development 2007-2013, Priority VIII – regional economy personnel, was implemented as an answer to the needs of Nowa Sól district residents regarding acquiring new, completing or improving qualifications and professional skills.

Main problems of people included in the Project are:

- lack of self-confidence, low self-esteem and motivation on dynamic job market,
- lack of development opportunities in the region,
- problems with finding work or the risk of losing it,
- financial barriers,
- lack of foreign languages command that ensures better perspectives on work market in Nowa Sól district,
- care of dependants,
- Shift work.

The main aim of the project was to obtain new, supplement or raise qualifications and skills through courses and trainings undertaken on own initiative by working adults.

Project included trainings: in English on basic, intermediate and advanced level, in German on basic, intermediate and advanced level, trainings in introducing quality systems, among others: ISO9001:2008, ISO14001:2004, OHSAS18001, ISO27001:2005 and trainings in soft skills: emotions management, sale and negotiations skills, communication in a team and applying NLP in business.

Project detailed aims:

1. Raising qualifications of 216 people in English.
2. Raising qualifications of 72 people in German.
3. Raising qualifications of 96 people in quality systems.
4. Raising qualifications of 210 people in soft skills.

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<sup>14</sup> *Nowosolski District employers study report*, Cracow 2012, page 57.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibidem*, page 55.

<sup>16</sup> *Lifelong education, On the basis of studies conducted in 2012 as part of III edition of the project Human Resources Balance*, Polish Agency for Enterprise Development, Warsaw 2012, [http://bkl.parp.gov.pl/system/files/Downloads/20121128143313/Kszta\\_cenie\\_przez\\_ca\\_e\\_ycie.pdf?1354109622](http://bkl.parp.gov.pl/system/files/Downloads/20121128143313/Kszta_cenie_przez_ca_e_ycie.pdf?1354109622), [available online: on 20 April].

5. Increase in self-confidence, self-esteem and motivation on dynamic job market at 570 people compared to initial value before the training in subjective evaluation of people taking part in trainings and courses.

In total the programme included 594 adults working and living in Nowa Sól district: 386 women and 208 men.

Target group, to which the Project was addressed, adults working and living in Nowa Sól district, not running business activity, in particular people employed of low or obsolete qualifications:

- adults over 18 years of age – 100 % of participants i.e. 594 BO
- women having more difficult occupational situation – 65 % of participants i.e. 386 BO
- people with at most secondary education – 80 % i.e. 475 BO
- people having dependants.

Participation of employees from Nowa Sól district enterprises was diverse both in terms of the enterprise size as well as the branch. Most employees who improved their professional qualifications and obtained new ones were from small companies, 47% of people taking part in courses and trainings, 42% from medium companies and 11% from large ones. Trainings and courses participants are employees from service branch, education, public administration, trade, industry-production branches.

The project was co-financed by European Union from the means of European Social Fund as part of Sub action 8.1.1 „Supporting professional qualifications development and counselling for enterprises of Operational Programme Human Resources Development 2007-2013. Project budget was: PLN 957 650.00 including: EFS co-funding – PLN 957 650.00, own contribution – PLN 0.00.

Within the project „New Qualifications – more certain future of Nowa Sól district residents” the following results were achieved:

- 570 people including 364 F and 206 M participated in the project i.e. 96%,
- 570 people completed the project,
- in line with the project English language courses on the levels: basic, intermediate and advanced and task 3 German language courses, also on three levels were completed in 100%, 288 people were trained including 191 F and 97 M.
- trainings in quality systems were realized in 97% i.e. 93 people including 50 F and 43 M,
- trainings in soft skills were realized in 90 % i.e. 189 people including 123 F and 66 M.

Achieved results in individual tasks:

- English language courses, 18 groups BO received 1728 hours of trainings.
- 216 people (148 F and 68 M) were qualified for participation in English language course,
- 216 people i.e. 100 % completed as scheduled,
- 120 people completed the course on basic level,
- 60 people completed the course on intermediate level,

- 36 people completed the course on advanced level.
- German language course, 6 groups BO received 256 hours of trainings.
- 72 people (43 F and 29 M) were qualified for participation in German language course,
- 72 people i.e. 100 % completed as scheduled,
- 24 people completed the course on basic level,
- 36 people completed the course on intermediate level,
- 12 people completed the course on advanced level.
- Quality Systems Trainings, 8 groups BO received 256 hours of trainings.
- 93 people (50 F and 43 M) were qualified for participation in quality management system trainings,
- 93 people i.e. 100% completed as scheduled,
- 24 people completed training ISO 9001: 2008,
- 24 people completed training ISO 14001:2004,
- 22 people completed training OHSAS 18001,
- 23 people completed training ISO 27001 : 2005.
- Soft trainings, 14 groups BO received 224 hours of trainings.
- 189 people (123 F and 66 M) were qualified for participation in soft trainings,
- 189 people i.e. 100% completed as scheduled,
- 58 people completed training NLP in business,
- 49 people completed training Communication in a team,
- 38 people completed training Emotions management,
- 44 people completed training Sales and negotiation skills.

Final Beneficiaries (BO) were made to participate in the project by various motives, most frequently mentioned included: achieving additional qualifications, skills, possibility to get a better job. Moreover the participants mentioned that due to participation in the project they will obtain soft skills such as: independence, responsibility, creativity, meeting new people.

Directly after completing the project in evaluation surveys 86,8% BO stated that support given within the project was adequate to occupational needs. Great majority – 96,8% answered that participation in educational project met their expectations. In final surveys change of attitude among courses and trainings participants was studied, on the basis of positive answers of respondents, the following results were recorded: self-confidence increase at – 72,5%, qualifications increase – 74,9%, increase in sense of usefulness on work market – 70,8%, greater courage and skills to use own potential – 78,2% of the surveyed. Participation in various forms of support in the project provided the participants with improving professional qualifications and obtaining new ones.

EFS support in the amount PLN 957 650.00 was an investment in human resources of enterprises, institutions and first of all working people aware of additional qualifications value. Aim four POKL was accomplished through implementing the project entitled „New

qualifications –more certain future of Nowa Sól district residents” within Operational Programme Human Resources, Priority VIII. Regional economy personnel Action: 8.1. Employees and enterprises development in the region, Subaction: 8.1.1.Supporting professional qualifications development and consultancy for enterprises.

It is recalled that human resources were strengthen through participation of working district residents in free courses and trainings, level of education and meaning of continuing education increased. Project aim was achieved, i.e. to obtain new skills, supplement or improve qualifications of 570 BO.

The project created conditions for the increase of stores of knowledge, skills, qualifications of each project participant being Nowa Sól district resident. Self-awareness of additional qualifications and skills increased. Among skills that will in the future determine personnel quality both on management and executive level, prevail: creativity and initiative, mobility and interpersonal communication ability<sup>17</sup>. These qualifications obtained by the project participants will surely translate into work quality, personnel mobility and economic and social development of Nowa Sól district.

Participation in the project gave the participants an opportunity to obtain additional qualifications, develop professional qualifications and personally. Proper investment into professional development will enable Nowa Sól district residents to meet the requirements of local and European work market.

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<sup>17</sup> *Ibidem*, page 155.

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