LIFELONG LEARNING AS A METHOD OF A MODERN LABOUR MARKET’S BALANCING. CASE OF POLAND

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Abstract:
Changing conditions of the modern labor market functioning are reasons for modification of the approach to learning process. Traditional model of learning in the youth, and then the longest possible maintenance of employment in one profession ceases to meet the requirements of modern labor market. Rapid changes in labor market mean that flexibility, inter-sector and geographical mobility is promoted but also continuous acquisition of knowledge and competence development have significant importance. In this context, widely understood system of education is challenged. One of its important element is concept of lifelong learning. The challenge today is to shape and change attitudes at all levels of learning. The paper presents main problems in implementing of concept of lifelong learning in Poland in division into groups: children, adolescents and younger adults, adults and seniors. The period of analysis covers years after 2004. As the analysis shows, the most important challenge for the education in Poland is further dissemination of pre-school education, especially in rural areas and increase in participation of adults in lifelong learning. In formal education, there is still disadvantage of low link between theory and practice. There are also significant disparities between general and vocational education in favor of the former. A preparation of schools to use ICT methods in educational process is weak. In Poland, learning process is generally identified with formal education, hence it is important to influence the society towards recognition of non-formal education significance. This could increase activity and mobility, which could contribute to labor market balancing.

Keywords: labor market, lifelong learning, education, Poland
1. LABOUR MARKET AND ITS IMBALANCE

The labor market is a place where the subjects responsible for the supply and demand shape the price of a specific commodity which is a labor force. Therefore, as in the case of all other markets, the labor market is governed by supply and demand (Mankiw 2012, p. 376). On the other hand, the labor market, as well as other factors of production is a specific market. It differs from most other markets in the sense that the demand in this market is a derived demand (Mankiw 2012, p. 376). Enterprises report demand for workers as a result of consumer demand for their products. Additionally, most work services are not final products ready for sale to consumers, but they are only inputs, which is used for production of other goods.

The economic subjects make decisions with a view to optimizing their own benefit (Rekowski 1994, p. 289). On the one hand, a consumer of goods and services offers its ability to perform certain types of work (he is responsible for the supply side of the labor market), on the other hand, a producer acquires necessary factors of production (including labor), paying certain price (it shapes a demand side of the labor market).

The consumer possesses a certain amount of time that can be allocated either at work or at leisure, which is dependent on its system of preferences. The work provides income, which in turn is used to purchase goods and services. Consequently, the consumer is looking for the optimal solution – to provide work services to maximize its benefits. In turn, the companies purchasing labor services bear respective costs. However, these costs are a necessary contribution to the production process of goods or services, which are then sold on the market. Since the primary objective of the company is to maximize the benefit (profit maximization) of the business, in this sense, the manufacturer determines the level of demand for labor factor – it is responsible for the demand side of the labor market (Rekowski 1994, p. 289).

When to aggregate labor supply of individual consumers and demand on the labor market of individual companies, then by comparing these values we can achieve the balance of the labor market. Depending on a period in question, as well as a structure of the market (monopsony or monopoly, among others) a balance will looked like slightly different.\(^1\) What is important is that the equilibrium is difficult to achieve, and the more natural is a state of permanent imbalance.

Analyzing a labor market from the point of view of strength exhibited by the participants, one must explicitly state that subjects responsible for the demand side (companies) show the advantage. This is not a distinctive feature of the labor market, because in the modern market economy we are dealing with a phenomenon that is known as a consumer market. This is a consumer (demand side of the market) who selects products offered by many supplying entities (supply side of the market). In the case of the labor market one has to deal with manufacturers which shape their decisions independently. Therefore achieving equilibrium in this market requires adjustments mainly on the supply side.

Not analyzing in details the factors influencing the demand side of the labor market, it is worth mentioning the most important ones. As such we can consider: wages, labor productivity associated with technological progress and indirect demand for products that are a result of work (Ehrenberg, Smith 2012, pp. 59-84; Borias 2005, pp. 104-158). In turn, as the most important determinants of the supply side of the labor market should be considered: wage and non-wage benefits from working, the number of people with specific qualifications, the benefits of non-work activities and non-economic determinants of economic activity (Ehrenberg, Smith 2012, pp. 40-47; Mankiw 2012, pp. 375-388). Additionally, other factors affecting the supply side can be, inter alia, labor market policy measures, such as height and length of granted unemployment benefits or labor unions activity.

Among instruments influencing the supply side of the labor market, that of particular interest are those activities that lead to an increase in a quantity and quality of the labor force. This leads to a fuller utilization of the available resources of the country, reduces unemployment and increases employment. Reducing mismatches between a demand and supply side of the labor market may involve a promoting and developing an education in broad sense. One of the concepts which is

\(^1\) The purpose of this paper is not to describe the balance (imbalance) of the labor market in all possible market structures but only to indicate that the imbalance is a typical condition on the market.
supported and implemented by states is a concept of lifelong learning. A desirable result of such activities is an increased number of people with the better education level and such qualifications, which will be a valuable asset in today’s competitive job market.

In the situation of Poland, adjustments of supply and demand in the labor market is an important issue, as the situation in this area of the economy is not quite good. In Poland there are a number of problems related primarily to the high unemployment rate, though, as it can be seen in Figure 1, after joining the European Union in 2004, its level was significantly lowered. Since 2008, the unemployment rate has a tendency to increase again.

**Picture 1:** Unemployment rate in Poland and selected economies in the years 2004-2012, in %

![Unemployment rate graph](image)


The particularly worrying situation is in the group of young people. Persons under the age of 25 are feeling the effects of prolonged financial and economic crises. This tendency is characteristic not only for Poland, but for the whole European Union. In some countries (e.g. Spain), youth unemployment is already above 50% (see table 1).

**Table 1:** Unemployment rate in age group of less than 25 years, in %

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EU27</td>
<td>17.5</td>
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<td>15.8</td>
<td>20.1</td>
<td>21.1</td>
<td>21.4</td>
<td>22.9</td>
</tr>
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<td>18.2</td>
<td>16.0</td>
<td>20.3</td>
<td>20.9</td>
<td>20.8</td>
<td>23.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>39.6</td>
<td>17.2</td>
<td>20.6</td>
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<td>25.8</td>
<td>26.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>22.9</td>
<td>22.0</td>
<td>24.6</td>
<td>37.8</td>
<td>41.6</td>
<td>46.4</td>
<td>53.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>8.7</td>
<td>13.8</td>
<td>10.8</td>
<td>11.2</td>
<td>9.9</td>
<td>8.6</td>
<td>8.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slovakia</td>
<td>37.3</td>
<td>33.4</td>
<td>19.3</td>
<td>27.6</td>
<td>33.9</td>
<td>33.7</td>
<td>34.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Own preparation based on Eurostat Database, 2013.

The above data, although limited only to selected indicators, are only to illustrate the problems that still exist on the Polish but also on other countries’ labor markets. On this basis it can be concluded that the imbalance in the labor market is a permanent phenomenon, whose severity varies over time. The higher tensions on the market, the more active policy should be directed to enhance adaptation processes. One of the most important activities in this regard is the adoption and implementation of the concept of the lifelong learning.
2. LIVELONG LEARNING CONCEPT AND ITS IMPLEMENTATION IN THE EUROPEAN UNION

Lifelong learning\(^2\) can be defined as ‘all forms of intentional learning activity, either formal or informal, undertaken on a continuous basis in order to raise the level of knowledge, skills and competences’ (Konieczny 2007, p. 89).\(^3\) In turn, the European Union Council Resolution of 2002 defines the concept as a learning process throughout almost whole life – from a preschool period till a retirement period. The education understood in that way, means any process of development of knowledge, skills and competencies of the individual. In above mentioned Resolution there is a statement that ‘lifelong learning must be understood as all learning activity undertaken throughout life, with the aim of improving knowledge, skills and competences within a personal, civic, social and/or employment-related perspective. (...) The principles in this context should be: the individual as the subject of learning, highlighting the importance of an authentic equality of opportunities, and quality in learning’ (Official Journal 2002, C 163). The idea of lifelong learning relates to a process of learning from pre-school up to the retirement stage and covers all forms of education. At the same this idea should not be seen only as one of many aspects of education and training, but more broadly as a ‘leitmotif’ that will ensure public participation in various forms of education (Konieczny, 2007, p. 94). Preparation and then participation of citizens in the process of lifelong learning deepens their willingness to take on challenges, innovative actions and builds their self-esteem. It allows also to move more freely in the modern labor market and supports personal development. Quality, accessibility and openness of education is a key condition for the development of society, the way to improve the quality of life, both in individual and social perspectives (Bis, Szewczak 2007, p. 66).

In 2002, the EU created the document ‘Education and Training 2010’ addressing the development of social welfare and education. This program covers all levels of education, both formal and non-formal, also in the form of schools and out of schools.\(^4\) The main normative is The Copenhagen Declaration, declaring the establishment of the ‘knowledge based Europe’ founded on a cooperation between Member States in the field of training and vocational education and on an increasing general access to the labor market.

The idea of lifelong learning is fundamental in creating the knowledge based economy because it is an instrument for improving qualifications of employees in response to the changing needs of the labor market. The lifelong development and modern economic model are one of the challenges and priorities of the European Union. In the EU there are many initiatives for the construction of the European area of lifelong learning enabling citizens to move freely between different forms of education, occupations, regions and countries. These activities are undertaken in coordination with the relevant policies on youth, employment, social inclusion and research (COM (2001) 678 final). In the said communication member states were obliged to develop a coherent strategy for the development of lifelong education (until 2006) and undertake joint actions conducive to the development of education available to all. The learning individual is a central aspect of these strategies. At the same time the communication set out a list of priority actions, the implementation of which should contribute to faster implementation of the concept of lifelong learning across Europe. This includes mainly: creating a culture of learning, increasing access to information and advice services on learning opportunities, increasing investment in learning, bringing students to educational opportunities; dissemination of basic skills, development of innovative concepts of learning/teaching.

The implementation of the national strategy for lifelong learning drew particular attention to the need for better integrating lifelong guidance into lifelong learning strategies, which was adopted in June 2002 by the Resolution of the Council and of the representatives of the governments of the Member States meeting within the Council on 21 November 2008 (Official Journal 2008, C 319). It identified priority areas in the field of counseling, especially good organization of information exchange on


\(^3\) Formal learning is a learning through participation in education and training programs leading to obtaining qualifications. Non-formal learning is a learning organized institutionally but beyond programs of education and training leading to obtaining qualifications. On the other hand, informal learning is a learning in an unorganized institutionally manner implemented either intentionally or unintentionally.

\(^4\) The program is delivered by the Copenhagen Declaration, Maastricht Communiqué and the Bolognan Declaration.
national policies and practices and ensure proper monitoring and evaluation of their implementation and to encourage further coordination and cooperation of all stakeholders at all possible levels (national, European and international).

Lifelong learning is an important element in developing and promoting a skilled, trained and adaptable workforce. Establishing a comprehensive strategy for learning throughout life is the goal of the integrated guidelines for growth and jobs, including guidelines for the employment policies of the member states (Official Journal 2005, L 205, p 21).

In December 2006, for effective implementation of the lifelong learning strategy in the EU, the European Parliament adopted the document, which is the benchmark for defining the key competences in lifelong learning (Official Journal 2006, L 394). The realization of the concept of 'lifelong learning' has also been widely addressed, among others, in the joint interim report of the Council and the Commission of March 2004 on the implementation of the detailed work program on the objectives of education and training in Europe ‘Education and Training 2010’.

In the years 2007-2013 a key document supporting the development of the Community as an advanced knowledge based society in accordance with the objectives of the Lisbon Strategy was the program ‘Lifelong Learning Program 2007-2013’. The program was designed to foster exchange, cooperation and mobility between education and training systems within the Community so that they become a world quality reference. Within the framework of the EU Lifelong Learning Program numerous support programs were available. They were targeted to different audiences so that to encourage the creation of the same capabilities in the field of lifelong learning. In the new financial framework 2014-2020, the a new program (Erasmus Plus) was introduced. Among many objectives to be implemented under this program, one of the most important is the fight against youth unemployment (European Commission, 2014, p. 9). In addition, the concept of lifelong learning is supported by the EU Structural Funds, the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (CEDEFOP) and the European Training Foundation.

The implementation of LLL policies was acknowledged as the most important strategic goal of European cooperation in education in the perspective of the year 2020 (Official Journal 2009, C 119, pp. 2-9). That meant implementation of different rules: lifelong learning, lifelong learning, learning concerns everyone, partnership for LLL, open approach towards qualifications, an individual is a central for LLL policy, effective investment in learning.

One of the most important instruments recommended by the European Parliament and the Council, to achieve the above rules are the European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning (Official Journal 2008, C 111, pp. 1-7). They provide an instrument of transformation, so that qualifications gained in different sectors and countries could become more readable and comparable in the EU.

3. PROBLEMS OF IMPLEMENTATION LIFELONG LEARNING CONCEPT IN POLAND

3.1. Children, pre-school education, early school education

Changing conditions of the functioning of the modern labor market are reasons for a modification of the approach to the learning process. Dynamic economic development, high technical and technological progress, as well as demographic changes (e.g. increase in the average life expectancy) are just few of the factors determining the need for a change in approach to the acquisition, preservation or change of competences and qualifications. The traditional model of learning in the youth, improving knowledge, skills and competence in later life, then the longest maintenance of employment in the same profession ceases to meet the requirements of the modern labor market. Rapid changes in a labor market mean that the flexibility, inter-sector and geographical mobility is promoted but also continuous acquisition of knowledge and competence development are becoming of significant importance. In this context, the widely understood system of education is being challenged. One of its important element is the concept of lifelong learning. It seems that now the most important challenges which face the government is to promote the internalization of this kind of needs in current and future employees. Therefore, there is a need for actions at every level of learning – from learning of the youngest in a family to the seniors in order to maintain their professional activity. Below, a reader will find a characteristic of the evolution of the situation in Poland in the field of
learning at all levels, i.e.: 1) group of children; 2) group of youth and young adults; 3) group of adults and 4) group of seniors. This will allow to assess the implementation of the concept of lifelong learning in Poland.

To effectively support the development of young children, including their skills, it is necessary to develop good quality of services of early care and education in conjunction with the support of parents. The traditional approach to education generally does not include this, the most intense period of learning, because it concentrates on the study in the formal context. Meanwhile, what the child learns in the first years of life, has a crucial impact on a quality and learning outcomes in the next stages of its development. Access to education and facilitating access to educational services are key factors that determine the course of educational path, and consequently the situation of individuals in the labor market. In Poland since the school year 2005/06 until 2012/13 the number of children aged 3-5 years participating in preschool education has doubled – from 447 to 886 thousand, and the participation of children in this age group in pre-school education increased from 41.0 to 69.7%. According to the index of early education development for children from 4 years to compulsory school age, Poland with the index 83.8% in the year 2012/2013 is fast approaching to the EU average of 93.3% and a European target set for 2020 (95%). Despite such rapid improvement, Poland is still at relatively low position in the EU and the OECD in terms of enhancing of the youngest children to participate in forms of early care and education. In addition, in Poland there are significant disparities in the promotion of education between urban and rural areas but also and limited access of pupils to extra-curricular and after school activities.

In the school year 2010/2011 in the age group 3-6 years, 69.9% of children were subject to the preschool education (67.3 % a year earlier). In cities 93.6% of children attended (an increase of 2.1 percentage points), and in rural areas 51.2% (an increase of 3.0 p. p.) (GUS 2012, p. 58).

### 3.2. Youth and younger adults - education and entering the labor market

One of the most important areas of analysis of the concept of lifelong learning, is the area of youth and adults. This is because the basic fact that this group of people is potentially the most interested in entering the labor market. In turn, the first contact with the labor market often determines the whole future working life. Hence, it is important to have first experiences positive.

A characteristic feature of the learning processes in Poland on virtually every level of education is bigger importance of formal than informal education. Therefore, Poland shows high achievements in references for education systems set by the EU. Of the five appointed by the EU benchmarks which were to be completed by 2010, Poland has exceeded the indicators in four areas, but only in one area lagged from the EU average. Detailed information regarding this matter have been collected in Table 2.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 2: Achievement of Poland in development of education</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Indexes of Education development</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. The proportion of youth with low achievement in reading (according to PISA)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. The proportion of early school leavers, i.e. people aged 18-24 with at most lower secondary education, which do not participate in education or training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. The proportion of people aged 20-24 with secondary education at least at the secondary level or vocational</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Number of graduates in mathematics, natural sciences and engineering</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Number of people aged 25-64 participating in education or training (during the four weeks before the survey)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: (Perspektywa 2013, p. 10).
Based on the data from the table it can be concluded that when it comes to criteria related to non-formal education, Poland ranks below the reference level for the whole EU. Number of people aged 25-64 participating in education or training in the four weeks before the survey ranged far below the result of the EU (4.5% in 2012 in Poland against 9.1% in the EU). Only small consolation is that the EU as a whole has not reached the intended purpose at the level of 12.5%. In the other criteria Poland was at the forefront of the European Union.

There are many factors influencing such good results of Poland. The most important among them are (Perspective 2013, p. 11): 1) clear improvement of competences in reading in a group of 15-year-olds, 2) significant reduction in diversity between schools achievements of 15-year-olds in reading, 3) significant increase in the number of students in higher education; 4) introduction of the uniform principles of creating, measuring and assessing the quality of education at the tertiary level. The last two points should be emphasized as there is a fairly high correlation between level of education and employment. Typically, the higher the educational level reached, the greater the chances of finding and maintaining employment. The data illustrating this problem are shown in Table 3.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of education</th>
<th>2004</th>
<th>2005</th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2009</th>
<th>2010</th>
<th>2011</th>
<th>2012</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Poland Primary</td>
<td>22.7</td>
<td>23.0</td>
<td>23.3</td>
<td>24.9</td>
<td>25.5</td>
<td>24.6</td>
<td>23.6</td>
<td>23.4</td>
<td>23.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>56.2</td>
<td>56.7</td>
<td>58.3</td>
<td>61.0</td>
<td>63.3</td>
<td>62.7</td>
<td>61.8</td>
<td>62.0</td>
<td>61.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tertiary</td>
<td>80.2</td>
<td>81.1</td>
<td>81.7</td>
<td>82.8</td>
<td>83.7</td>
<td>83.7</td>
<td>82.5</td>
<td>82.2</td>
<td>82.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany Primary</td>
<td>40.7</td>
<td>42.3</td>
<td>44.1</td>
<td>44.8</td>
<td>45.6</td>
<td>45.3</td>
<td>45.4</td>
<td>52.7</td>
<td>52.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>68.2</td>
<td>69.4</td>
<td>71.2</td>
<td>73.1</td>
<td>74.0</td>
<td>73.9</td>
<td>74.7</td>
<td>76.0</td>
<td>76.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tertiary</td>
<td>82.6</td>
<td>82.8</td>
<td>84.2</td>
<td>85.3</td>
<td>85.7</td>
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<td>86.7</td>
<td>87.6</td>
<td>87.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slovakia Primary</td>
<td>13.9</td>
<td>13.3</td>
<td>14.5</td>
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<td>14.8</td>
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<td>67.5</td>
<td>69.0</td>
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<td>65.4</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tertiary</td>
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<td>83.2</td>
<td>83.9</td>
<td>83.1</td>
<td>83.8</td>
<td>80.3</td>
<td>78.0</td>
<td>76.7</td>
<td>74.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU27 Primary</td>
<td>47.1</td>
<td>47.4</td>
<td>48.0</td>
<td>48.5</td>
<td>48.0</td>
<td>46.1</td>
<td>45.1</td>
<td>45.4</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>67.9</td>
<td>68.2</td>
<td>69.2</td>
<td>70.1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tertiary</td>
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<td>83.1</td>
<td>83.7</td>
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<td>82.7</td>
<td>82.2</td>
<td>82.0</td>
<td>81.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Own preparation based on (Eurostat Database, 2013)

The data in Table 3 indicate that in Poland, like in the European Union, persons with a higher level of education are more likely to be in employment. It does not matter whether it is a country with a well functioning labor market (Germany) or a country that feels tensions in this market (Slovakia). In all cases the most disadvantaged group of people were those with only primary education. This confirms the need to focus on increasing participation in higher education activities. In this context, dynamic growth in the number of students that took place in Poland after the transition period should be evaluated as a positive one.

Equally important is to ensure adequate quality of education for all, including higher levels of education. From the point of view of the labor market it is an important issue to match curricula and to equip future workers with competences and skills that will meet the requirements of employers. In this context the practical training of students becomes extremely important. The implementation of the practical use of knowledge (promotion of vocational practices, including foreign ones) as well as the running of some courses by practitioners, all these should help to adjust features of the graduate to labor market requirements. Consequently, mismatches occurring between the supply and the demand side of the labor market might be leveled to some extent.

3.3. Adults

In addition to a group of adolescents and young adults, one of the significant target groups for the policy of lifelong learning is a group of adults. Persons above 25 years who have already entered the labor market, should have a belief in the desirability of continuous upgrading of skills and qualifications, because it significantly increases the chances to obtain, maintain or favorable change employment. In Polish law, unlike in the EU, the concept of ‘adult learning’ has not been defined
It occurs a concept of ‘permanent learning’ but it differs significantly from the concept of ‘adult learning’. In the case of the former, the action focuses on younger people (under 25 years) who attend the educational system. In turn, the EU ‘adult learning’ is mainly interested in people between 25 and 65 years of age and at the same time learning can take various forms and different places.

Assessing the situation of Poland with regard to participation of adults in learning, one has to keep in mind that depending on the measurement methodology Poland can be classified on a weak or a relatively good position. Labor Force Survey measures a participation in education or training in the period of four weeks before the survey. In this perspective, Poland stands out from the goal which was founded to be achieved in 2010 (12.5%) but also from the EU average, which in 2012 was 9.1%. In 2012 in Poland the share of people attending education and training amounted to only 4.5% (Perspective 2013, p. 17). It is noted, however, that the participation of adults (25-64 years) in formal education in Poland does not differ from the EU average. According to the methodology used in the Adult Education Survey, which takes into account the period of 12 months before the survey, the results in Poland are similar to those in the EU. In 2011, the calculated rate in Poland reached a level of 5.4% compared to 6.2% in the EU28 (Eurostat Database 2014). In Poland non-formal education has not been appreciated yet which is a result of, firstly, equating education with formal education, and secondly, relatively good state of the education of children, adolescents and young adults. Having in mind the situation indicated above, a promotion of education and training for people over 25 years old becomes one of the most important tasks for policy of lifelong learning.

3.4. Seniors

The concept of lifelong learning draws attention to the growing importance of education in a group of seniors. Growing life expectancy in Poland (female: 81 years, males: 72 years), improvements in the health of the elderly and the shift of pension rights for men and women to 67 years of age make it increasingly important to take measures to encourage seniors and support them to maintain the longest possible professional and social activity. One of the specificity of learning in this group in Poland is the strong development of the so-called universities of third age (UTA), which goal is to conduct lectures and practical training courses, such as computer courses. In Poland there are over 450 universities of the third age. These UTA operate mainly in traditional universities. In Poland, 92 out of 223 universities (about 42%) support the operation of the UTA. At the same time there is a steady tendency of increasing the number of participants in retirement as active members of the UTA.

4. CONCLUSIONS

In normally operating economy, there is a whole group of factors affecting the balance on the labor market. One of them is education and the related concept of lifelong learning (LLL). The result of the implementation and execution of LLL policy is increasing of competences and qualifications of prospective and current employees, which means a positive change in the supply side of the market. At the same time due to better adaptation to the requirements of employers, we can observe an elimination of mismatches between demand for labor and its supply.

A key element of the strategy of lifelong learning is the transformation of a traditional education. It represents the first step towards ensuring learning opportunities to all throughout their lives. Since many years Polish educational system has been transforming. The changes apply to both organizational structures and patterns of learning. Education ceased to be identified only with the process of enrichment of knowledge and experience, and is increasingly being recognized as an important factor contributing to the reduction of social inequalities and balancing the labor market. Nowadays, an education decides about the adjustments of the competences of graduates to the labor market requirements. In turn, it translates into a perspective socio-economic development, both on a regional and local level. In order to determine directions of development, the Polish education system should assess its strengths and weaknesses (Hall 2010, p. 5). The strength of the educational system in Poland is a universal secondary education (high school) of youth and a significant increase in the number of students in higher education in recent years. In turn, the most important challenge in education is further dissemination of pre-school education, especially in rural areas, and increasing participation of adults in lifelong learning. Particular problems exist in the development of formal and informal education at all levels – from family learning to learning of seniors (Perspective 2013, p. 12).
also significant disparities between general education and vocational education in favor of the former. A preparation of schools to use ICT methods in the educational process is weak. There is a low dissemination of lifelong guidance services and the number of students in higher education is expected to decrease.

Due to the fact that in Poland learning is generally equated with formal education (lasting up to about 25 years of age), it is necessary to influence the society to perceive a non-formal education as beneficial. In a result, we would be able to notice improvement in participation in lifelong learning in the group of people over the age of 25. This could also increase their activity, inter-sector and geographical mobility. All above mentioned changes could contribute to improvement of a labor market balance.

REFERENCE LIST