

THE PSYCHOLOGICAL COMPETENCE OF VOCATIONAL EDUCATION TEACHERS

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Abstract

The role of vocational education teacher in modern society cannot be underappreciated. The postmodern world with a great need for *know how* determines the model of education. Lack of qualified workers and redundancy of MA graduates leads to the increase of unemployment rates among young people. The model of vocational schools in Poland as well as in other countries is changing. It is not anymore just preparation to be qualified worker but rather gaining skills to adapt in constantly modifying conditions. The aim of the article is to present psychological competences that are significant for vocational education teachers and to introduce the level of them among the teachers participating postgraduate studies *The vocational education teacher for future*.

Key words

Competence, vocational school, vocational education teacher, ethics, involvement, economy, organization commitment, ethics, developmental orientation

The role of vocational education teacher in modern society cannot be underappreciated. The postmodern world with a great need for *know how* determines the model of education. Lack of qualified workers and redundancy of MA graduates leads to the increase of unemployment rates among young people.

Fast development of technology, mechanic, informatics is a great step for human being, however it lays great responsibility upon vocational teachers. The life-long learning is a fundamental feature of being a teacher, but concerning vocational education teachers it becomes the *sine qua non*. Science and its application changes few times during the life of an average man. Therefore the model of vocational schools is changing. It is not anymore just preparation to be qualified worker but rather gaining skills to adapt in constantly modifying conditions. To achieve that goal Polish vocational education teachers are offered a variety of courses and postgraduate studies to improve their psychological and pedagogical competence, as they are recognized to be basic in preparing young people to cope with postmodern reality and the expectations of employers.

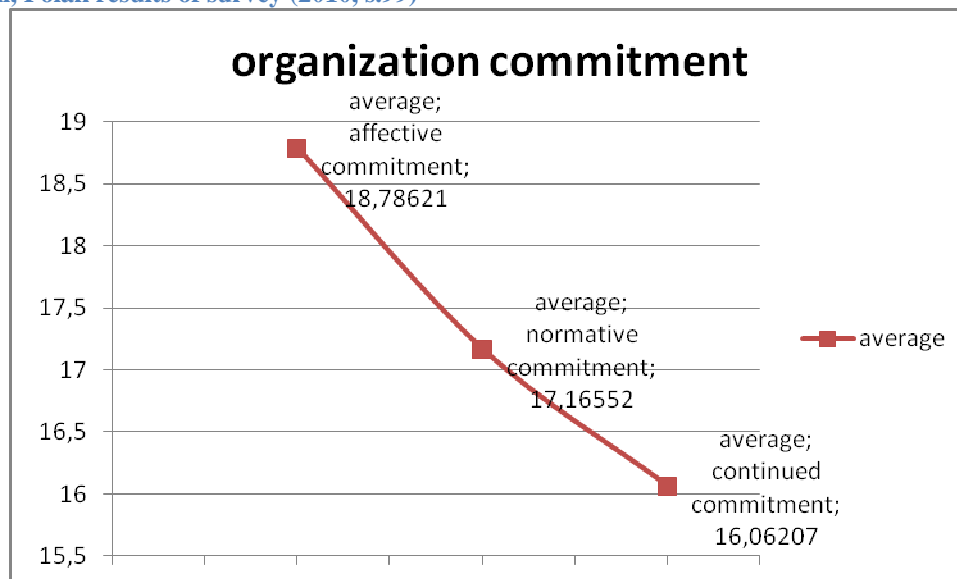
The main factor of the development in the knowledge based economy is the ability to create and implement new solutions, products and processes. In consequence the modern companies expect employees to be essentially and psychologically prepared to interact with clients, to be result orientated. Other desired advantages are: commitment in entrusted tasks, independence, courage to take up the risk, flexibility and creativity. This kind of skills cannot be simply taught they have to be modelled by the teachers. Moreover those teachers to be effective should have proper competences. According to Kwaśnica (2003) there are two categories of competence that are significant: moral-practical competence (including interpretation, ethics, communication), technical competence (including methodology of teaching and practice). The research of Żegnalek (2010) shows that the most important

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competence to model commonly desired features of vocational students are the personality and ethics.

According to Chrupała-Pniak at al. (2010) the key teacher's competence to form innovative attitude among vocational students is the organization commitment, understood as psychological identification with the place of work or employer (here: school). The survey taken by Chrupała-Pniak and others, among the participants of postgraduate studies *The vocational education teacher for future*, shows the attitude to work of active vocational teachers. The graph below presents organization commitment of interviewed teachers.

Tabela 1 Vocational Teachers' Organization Commitment. Source: Adaptation of Chrupała - Pniak, Grabowski, Polak results of survey (2010, s.99)

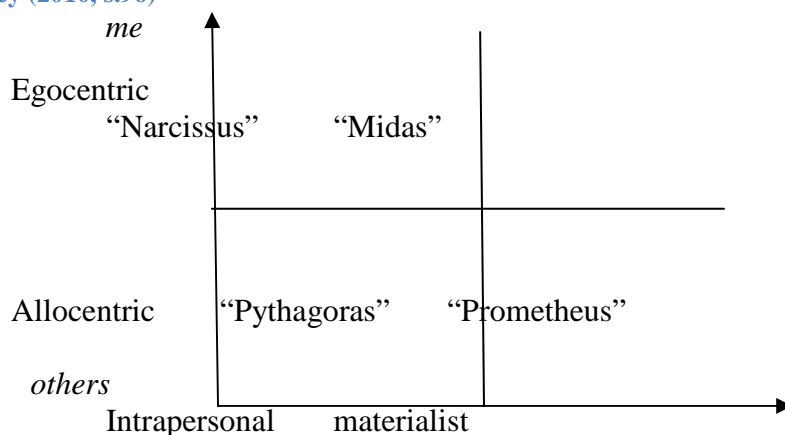


The term affective commitment means the emotional attachment to organization, this feature is highly required as it predicts the tendency to individual success as well as school (organization) success (Rhoades, at al.2001). A person with high rate of affective commitment identifies with school and its aims, is involved in, and enjoys membership in the organization. The continued commitment is defined by Kanter (1968, s.504) as that which occurs when there is a 'profit associated with continued participation and a "cost" associated with leaving'. People with high rate of this kind of involvement believe it is easier to work in that organization, because it is not difficult or tiring, what is more they are the group that indicates likelihood to change the organization. The normative commitment shows that people work because they believe it is "good thing", they fulfil the tasks because they feel obligated (Meyer, 1990). To sum up the affective commitment can be understood as identification with organization and its goals, the normative commitment is obligation and continued commitment is the need to work. According to Niemierko (2007) the difference between good and bad teacher is the awareness and identification with goals. For that reason only those with high rate of affective commitment can be regarded as effective teachers and tutors. Fortunately that rate among examined vocational teachers is quite high comparing to other rates.

Following further research of Chrupała-Pniak at al.(2010) the second determinant of effective teaching in vocational schools is the developmental orientation of the teachers. Some types of developmental orientation can be rudimentary for teachers, while others can be detrimental for teaching process. The developmental orientation is sometimes identified with strivings or long-range goals, which show the general tendency in ones' lives (Emmons, 2005). They determine whether people approach goals or avoid them, it is commonly known that

those who prefer setting goals and facing difficulties to reach them are known to be more charismatic and as a result be better tutors. Chrupała-Pniak at al.(2010) presents four categories of developmental orientation, called with mythic names of ancient characters: Narcissus (egocentric with intrapersonal tendency), king Midas (egocentric with materialistic tendency), Pythagoras (allocentric with intrapersonal tendency), Prometheus (allocentric with materialistic tendency). Ancient names are the types of personality that present in a very clear way the developmental tendency. Narcissus was trying to reach his goals, but he was very self-orientated and do wealth of the others did not matter for him. King Midas very self orientated but, his main aim was growing reach. Pythagoras the most known ascetic, so tendency to the good of the others, but the most important is the inside, while Prometheus also working for good of the others but thinking about material side of life. The most desirable attitude for teachers are Midas or Pythagoras as they reckon the growth and development of students as the most important. On the other hand the results of survey show that those teachers who represent Narcissus have the highest rate of affective commitment. What is more the average for Narcissus is the highest, and for Midas the lowest. Such result may be alarming because it could mean that vocational teachers work only for their own good and development, not caring about their students growth and interest. The diagram below shows the directions of developmental orientation,

Rysunek 1 Developmental orientation. Source: Adaptation of Chrupała - Pniak, Grabowski, Polak results of survey (2010, s.96)



The last but not least is ethics. After Chudzicka-Czupala and Grabowski (2010) teacher's ethic has direct influence on student's attitude to school. Indeed those teachers, who believe in work ethics, appreciate hard work and understand it as their moral duty. Furthermore they are usually conscious, reliable and really involved in their work, as a result they particularly take the common good of students into consideration. Ethics is also highly related to intrinsic motivation and affective commitment to organization. According to Chrupała-Pniak at al.(2010) ethic is very important to vocational teachers, her survey shows that most of the teachers think ethic is the most important in their work and what is more most of them believe the ethics directs their work with students.

To conclude the modern vocational teacher's role is to educate a student ready to cope with the problems of global, postmodern society. The task is not easy, the economy expects employees to be self-confident, flexible, ready to adapt, able to self-educate and of course intrinsic motivated. In order to educate a person with this kind of features, the psychological competences are essential. Ethics, affective commitment, and developmental orientation are those most often emphasized by many scientists. Only an ethic, motivated person aware of the aims and really involved in the work can become a successful vocational teacher. As the research of Chrupała-Pniak at al.(2010) shows, majority of postgraduate students (145

interviewee) believe they present all those features. The question is: *Why do we have problems with vocational schools in Poland then?* First of all unfortunately the belief is not always the truth. Secondly that survey taken among vocational teachers shows one more interesting thing, the vocational teachers very often start postgraduate studies to get the certificate and not to study. The research explains that most of them start education with a picture of their work in their minds and they are not very interested in changing it. They come to classes just because of continued commitment (they were asked or ordered to do it), or normative commitment (they know they have to get certificate), they do not come to learn. Thirdly teachers in Poland feel undervalued, underpaid and simultaneously the collapse of teachers authority, causes the fall of motivation either intrinsic or extrinsic. As a result we can say that improving the vocational education depends not only on the psychological competences of vocational teachers, but also on the psychological competences of university teachers and the internal educational politics. The doubtless thing is the great need of change that could finally answer the needs of knowledge based economy.

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