THE ROLE OF LOCAL AUTHORITIES IN THE DEVELOPMENT RELATIONAL CAPITAL: RURAL SCHOOLS PERSPECTIVE

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Since the late 90s of last century, a small primary schools, including rural schools are closed. Originally intended this effect: shortening of primary education (transformation of the eight schools in six school classes), demographic, and transfer of schools to local government units. This means that the management of schools should use management methods. The article states that the relational capital can be a factor for competitiveness and success of the school. The article presents the results of interviews with experts affiliated to the Silesian Cluster of Education. The aim of study was to identify ways to build competitive educational institutions. Each of the respondents in their statements drew attention to the importance of building relationships and cooperation with the environment. Studies show, however, the lack of preparedness of schools to build partnerships and relationships with the environment.

Key word: education, collaboration, local territorial units, relational capital, school.

JEL codes: M19, M38, Z18.

1. Introduction

Changes in the economy, which resulted from the transformation of the political system, contributed to the start of 1 September 1999 educational reform. Its aim was to open the school to the expectations of local communities to encourage their cooperation and collaboration with the school. The essence of this approach reflects the EU’s Lisbon Strategy. It has set the goal of member countries to improve the quality and efficiency of education systems to facilitate universal access to education systems and opening up education on the local environment. According to the Strategy, the school should learn from innovative, valuable foreign experience and business experience in the field of organization and management. The strategy also envisages the provision of high quality education in schools.

The implementation of public tasks, the demographic, responding to social needs, transparency of activity and internal actions makes the organization of education must be kept adjusted to the declining number of students. In addition, lower cost global education resulting from a smaller number of students it is difficult to use to improve its level.

Since the late 90s of last century, small primary schools, including rural
schools are closed. Originally had an influence m.in: shortening the learning time in primary school (recast an eight schools in the six years of school), the demographic and transfer of schools to local government units that make decisions about the organization of the network of schools in the area, guided by economic considerations. The process of closing schools, unfortunately, continues. The decision taken by the local authorities to close schools is not an easy decision, but sometimes necessary, because the maintenance of the school generates costs incurred by the municipality, which makes it necessary to pay extra money on her own resources maintenance, as funds from educational subsidies are not sufficient. Closing schools usually raises understandable emotions. However, this trend can be prevented.

The aim of the paper is to present the opportunities and challenges faced by local government units as bodies carrying out public schools with the need to liquidation small and rural schools. In particular, the focus is on showing the relational capital as a remedy to the increasing requirements for school facilities. The article is a solution developed by the experts during the work of the Silesian Cluster of Education. The aim of the study was to identify ways to build competitive educational establishments. The process can be relational capital. The article consists of two parts. In the first section of this paper the main conceptual arguments of relational capital. In the next section presents the role of local authorities in the development of relational capital education institutions. Presented here are the solutions adopted in the Silesian Voivodeship.

2. Relational capital

Relational capital refers to the value of the relationship between the firm and its environment (Burt, 2002). Relational capital can be business capital i.e. the value the relationship that the organization maintains with the main agents connected with its business processes, and social relational capital which the organization maintains with other social agents and it’s surroundings. The relational capital is defined as the organisational association with the internal and external stakeholders of a firm. These include customers, employees, suppliers, industry associations, stakeholders and strategic alliance partners of a firm. It is the value of the relationship between the firm and its business environment. The main indicators of which are reputation, strategic alliance, customers, suppliers and connection with other agents in the related market.

Relational capital stands for the external structure family of intangible assets, comprising stocks and flows of relationships to stakeholders, communities and the public, the firm reputation that can change over time and the value of relationships that can also partly be translated into legal property such as trademarks and brand names (Sveiby, 2001). Relational capital embodies relations of organisations to other corporate actors and stakeholders as well as factors of human and structural capital involved in the external networking of an organisation. Such relational capital factors strengthen the image and the competitiveness in the market (Wu, 2008; Zhang, 2008) and also attract qualified members to the organisation, thus contributing to the devel-
opment of HC (Vasileiadou, 2010). Relational capital is primarily developed through interaction and networking. Thereby, in particular cultural knowledge contributes to the development of relational capital and vice versa. The cultural knowledge of organisations ‘is based on traditions and beliefs of a symbolic reality and influenced by a broader cultural context as well as by individual and collective sense-making processes’ (Vasileiadou, 2010).

The main theme of the relational capital is the level of mutual trust, respect and friendship which arises out of the close interactions between internal and external partners. Trust is supposed to be existing when one party has confidence in another partner’s reliability and integrity. This is embedded in a particular exchange relation which becomes a fundamental basis of long-term relationships between partners. As such, in the context of internal and external stakeholders, it can be perceived safely that the enterprise’s relational capital is represented by the relationships among employees and within the customers and suppliers of an organisation.

Relational capital includes company image, customer loyalty, customer satisfaction, and interaction with suppliers by the employee’s negotiating capacity, distribution channels, supplier channels, licensing agreements, and franchising agreements in an organisation. Relational capital is the knowledge accumulated by the firm as a result of its business dealings with the third parties and the potential for future knowledge accumulation as a result of such business deals. Its value to the firm is directly related with the length of relationship with the third parties connected with the organisation.

Relational capital involves issues such as trust, friendship and respect (Coleman, 1990). It is considered as the extent to which the partners feel comfortable and are willing to rely on trust in dealing with one another (Ariño, 2001). For example, in a study on joint ventures of Büchel and Thuy (2001) identified two behavioral factors related to relational capital. Equity, understood as fair dealing including the sociological meaning of indebtedness and going beyond the economic/rational calculation of equivalence of benefits and a second factor referring to the quality of the relationship as the willingness of partners to commit to the relation.

Strong relational capital usually engenders close interaction between alliance partners, based on which alliance partners are able to conduct organizational learning, strong relational capital also provides effective channel for organizational learning. Strong relational capital is the basis of organizational learning. Strong relational capital makes aged alliance possible. That is, mutual trust, respect and friendship will lead to a long time cooperation. At the same time, although the possibilities of core proprietary lost to partner increases, the opportunism of alliance partners will be lowered down. Strong relational capital enhances attitudinal commitment. Attitudinal commitment is a kind of emotional or affective component. It means alliance partners have high psychological identification to the cooperation relationship. They intend to contribute a high level of importance and foster the relationship. This attitudinal commitment will also provide basis for effective organizational learning. Because of the inherent dependencies of alliance partners, the conflict is hard to avoid the per-
ception of other alliance partners.

The essence of relational quality is that it is not only an important variable influencing alliance performance, but also depends on a number of identifiable factors, some of which can be managed consciously. Relational capital allows partners to rely on trust, but is seen to be broader than trust, it also encompasses, among other things, the compatibility of corporate cultures and the convergence of organizational characteristics (Ariño et al. 2001). Strong relational capital usually engenders close interaction between alliance partners. It facilitates exchange of information and know-how across the alliance interface and builds in through a feedback pattern of a ‘trust-cycle’ (Butler, 1995; Zand, 1972).

The norm of reciprocity provides the basis for a theory of cooperation (Axelrod, 1988) and is the basis of stable relationships. The norm calls for parties to help rather than harm those whose actions have benefited them. It also suggests that parties should respond in kind to those damaging their interests and thus an alliance partner’s exploitation of the firm’s cooperative behavior should not be tolerated. In addition, strong information sharing can signal trust and trustworthiness in alliance relationships. In related research, interviews with managers showed that trust signaling symbols can involve behaviors suggestive of openness and receptivity in communication patterns, fairness and discretion in interactions (Butler 1991). Gradually, as each side deals repeatedly with their partner, suspicion declines and trust grows reciprocally (Johnson, 1996; Ring, 1992). This starts a process in which relational norms evolve. Relational norms are defined as expectations about behavior that are shared by a group of decision-makers and provide guidelines for the initial probes that potential exchange partners may make towards each other. Relational norms prescribe acceptable behaviour at the onset of inter-organizational partnerships, which, if considered equitable by partner firms, eventually lead to future expectations of trust.

Relational capital in the alliance is considered as the quality of the relationship that exists between alliance partners. It is through relational capital that the alliance is actually enacted and implemented. It facilitates exchange and transfer of information and know-how across the alliance interface (Kale, 2002). As in all business interactions, the building of relational capital depends on the partnering signalling to each other and the interpretation and response to this signalling.

3. The role of local authorities in the development of relational capital - the perspective of education institutions

Increasingly, it is pointed out that the role of schools in many environments is not limited only to the learning function of children and adolescents. The school is also an institution affecting the development potential of the social environment in which it operates. This requirement stems from the belief that school resources are not enough to effectively respond to the challenges of modernity. The school must use the resources of the environment, while giving a chance to the environment and the use of its resources are used resources and the school or the local community for
mutual development is one of the twelve requirements of the State posed to schools. Full text and description of the requirements contained in the regulation of the Minister of National Education of 7 October 2009. Concerning changes in pedagogical supervision. It was assumed that the school must respond to the needs of the local community and the changes that are taking place in its environment. According to the requirements, cooperation by the school or the local environment affects their mutual development. Using the resources of the school in the immediate environment is creating or expanding the basic conditions of teaching, education and care of school and can bring a lot of benefit to the development of students. The use of environmental resources is made possible by establishing and developing cooperation with the school acting surrounded by institutions and organizations and the local community. Collaboration can take many forms, from information sharing, and organizing joint ventures, and may include a different number of entities depending on the needs and wealth of the local environment.

At present, cooperation education institutions with the surroundings is not sufficient. On behalf of the Ministry of Education carried out a study on the cooperation of schools with external entities. Research has shown that cooperation with the environment is not a priority for the directors of the schools surveyed. They see the cooperation with organizations that can expand the offer of school as an extra, not activities that are an important part of the educational process. Respondents school directors are confident that the relationship with the environment is necessary for the basic tasks of statutory school. Often, however, this cooperation is routine, there is no vision of its development. Schools avoid entering into relationships with external institutions that are associated with entering into contracts with financial consequences. Studies show, however, the lack of readiness of schools to build partnerships and cooperation projects such relationships. According to some directors should be more support information and advice from the competent authority and the authority conducting. Directors also particularly emphasize the importance of meetings with directors or joint visits to other schools. Currently, there is little they think of such forms, which would allow for the exchange of information, experience and good practice (Hernik, 2012).

The main aim of the research was to determine to determine the factors influencing the success of small and rural schools, as well as the presentation of the challenges facing local government in the face of progressive elimination of these schools. Due to the purpose of research - the interpretation process and the effects from the viewpoint of the participants, further describe and understand the fact - far to use a qualitative test methods. They were selected on purpose, because the object of interest is a social process. In addition, they will provide new knowledge and enrich the description of the test subject. This goal was also protocol prepared to conduct interviews – it contained mainly questions of interpretation and understanding of the events:

1. What, according to Mr / Ms, may consist of local government involvement in the rescue before the liquidation of small and rural schools?
2. What is the importance of relational capital for the development of school?
3. What makes a school set up cooperation with its environment?
4. What are the barriers to establishing cooperation between schools with the environment?

Empirical data to verify the research literature, an analysis of the desk research covering national and regional documents, in particular the document „Technology Development Program Silesia in the years 2010–2020”. The research was exploratory and provide access to the wider research process dedicated relational capital formation education institutions, especially in rural areas. Empirical data were collected using the expert interview. Experts, studies were representatives of schools affiliated to the Silesian Cluster of Education. A total of twenty interviews with directors of schools. All participants are members of the Silesian Cluster of Education, among them were representatives of 38% of micro and small schools and 62% of universities.

Since January 2012 in Silesia Voivodship project is being implemented under the name of „Silesian Cluster of Education”. The program is co-financed by the European Union under Measure 1.3. Transfer of technology and innovation, Priority I – Research and technological development (R&D), innovation and entrepreneurship Regional Operational Programme of Silesia in 2007–2013. The project brings together 36 leading educational institutions and universities in Silesia region.

The subject of cooperation within the Silesian Cluster of Education is to create innovative, comprehensive educational products, promote a common brand of our products and the cluster based on the potential and needs of the market in terms of human resource development, with particular emphasis on the synergy between the needs reported by employers, and the education system and forms school. The mission of the Silesian Cluster of Education is co-operation and exchange of experience between the companies operating in the education sector, as well as the inclusion of other entities interested in working in the universities, business environment institutions, research units and owners of training firms in order to develop and create innovative services in the field of education.

The main objective of Silesian Cluster of Education is to develop cooperative relationships (clustering) between companies operating in the education sector, as well as the inclusion of other entities interested in working in the universities, business environment institutions, research units and training business owners to strengthen the capacity and competitiveness of the region province. Silesian and implementation of joint educational projects. These conditions may lead to the conclusion that in the case under consideration the cluster issues concerning the role of local governments in creating relational capital have been well developed.

When analysing the respondents’ answers, we can conclude that education is an important tool for building social cohesion. Schools are generally perceived as a breakwater for protection from social and family disintegration. Therefore, the education system must appear as part of the local landscape and encourage the local community to get involved in its operation, and take responsibility for educating their children, even by increasing its activity in existing facilities or creating new ones.
Education identified with the good of the whole society is one of the spheres of activity of the state and local government, which does not give up easily market rules. This is due to the particular social significance. Hence in the act on the education system provided conditions for the operation of public infrastructure for implementing educational tasks, as evidenced by the obligation to conduct public schools and institutions by the respective local government units.

Educational tasks are recognized as their direct responsibility of local government units under provisions of the constitutional laws of local government. Art. 7 paragraph. 1 of the Act of 8 March 1990. The Local Government that satisfying the collective needs of the community is the responsibility of the municipality. In particular, the tasks of their own community cover matters related to, among others, public education. Local government as a local organization of social life was constitutionally and statutorily empowered to meet the needs of community residents and this obligation can not give up. The key issue for each local government to set up the development strategy of education, which would be incorporated in the overall strategy for the functioning of local government. Mandatory nature of the educational tasks of local government units is of particular importance in the case of liquidation of schools and public institutions and / or having its schools to entities other than the local government.

Each of the respondents in their statements pointed to the importance and the importance of building relationships and cooperation with the environment. It is of special importance in the event of liquidation schools. This situation forces a school of small, rural to gain competitiveness through the acquisition of unique resources and treatment resources as a potential strategic school. Possession of scarce resources is a source of annuity monopoly, accelerates the creation, sharing, diffusion, absorption and exploitation of knowledge – which results in above-average profitability and competitiveness autonomous school. Respondents emphasize that this unique resource can be important to know which is the potential to achieve a particular purpose, repeating certain actions, which will therefore contribute to obtaining results. Possession of scarce resources is a source of annuity monopoly, accelerates the creation, sharing, diffusion, absorption and exploitation of knowledge – which results in above-average profitability and competitiveness autonomous school. In addition, respondents pointed to the fact that the life of knowledge is in the era of increasing competitiveness definitely shorter. Rapid technological development, pervasive change makes knowledge resources are quickly outdated, and certain areas of the college, which today are important for the business entity, tomorrow may be irrelevant. Knowledge possessed by the school should be continually renewed by it, updated and modified, which determines its usefulness and value. Gain access to unique resources that the school is not able to produce or acquire allow school relationships with the environment.

Respondents indicate a big problem mental. Interactions are not priority for the directors of the schools surveyed. Indicate that interactions with the environment are treated by school heads as those that can expand the offer of school as an extra, and not through the prism of action, an essential component of the educational process. Schools seem to monopolize education and restrict it to implement the program in
classrooms. Respondents believe that relationships are necessary to perform basic statutory tasks of the school. Schools avoid entering into relationships with institutions external, which are associated with entering into contracts with financial consequences. Studies show, however, the lack of preparedness of schools to build partnerships cooperation projects and such relations.

4. Conclusions

1. In the light of the considerations presented in the article can be stated that the Polish education, especially in rural areas is now facing the fundamental problem of adapting its structure and deals with the challenges arising from changes in the social system, resulting from unfavourable economic trends and demographic progressive collapse.

2. Major changes require a search for solutions. Method may be a reference to the practice of management in local and regional public administration, which will gradually eliminate bottlenecks education relational capital. A wide range of benefits derived from the relational capital and the possible thanks to cooperation with other competitive advantage, competitiveness and success of one school claims development factors for relational capital.

3. This wording is intended to show the desired direction of the local government units. Current and cognitive new direction of investigation is the activity of local governments in building and supporting the relational capital formation in small, rural schools. It is also the search for factors influencing the capital in schools in rural areas.

References


**VIETOS VALDŽIOS INSTITUCIJŲ VAIDMUO PLĖTOJANT RELIACINĮ KAPITALĄ: KAIMO MOKYKLŲ PERSPEKTIVOS**

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**Santrauka**


Raktiniai žodžiai: bendradarbiavimas, mokyklos, kapitalas, teritoriniai vienetai.

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