

# EDUCATION TOWARDS OBTAINING VARIOUS FORMS OF CAPITAL

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## ABSTRACT

The article deals with evaluation of the process of education as an instrument enabling an individual to acquire certain competencies (a kind of capital). These when used in an active way, may help him/her to reach different personal benefits, or even benefits for the whole society in a given territory. Possible relationships between education and different types of capital are shown. Special attention is given to a relatively new and in this context less discussed concept of social capital. Traditionally the concept of education is regarded as an investment into human capital. For example in the case of Czechia education process is perceived mostly as acquisition of individual knowledge and skills relevant for living, for holding social roles or performing job. Despite its very problematic nature, education should be also regarded as an investment into social capital. However, it remains unclear whether investment into social capital is beneficial. Its returns are less easily definable and harder to specify. Moreover, it is also unclear who benefits from this investment. Only those who are connected to the affected networks or the local/regional society as a whole?

**Keywords:** education, regional development, human capital, social capital, regional identity

## 1. Introduction

The aim of this article is to discuss which should be the role of education for functioning and development of the modern society. The importance of the process and of the product of education used to be stressed nearly at any time and in any culture, although the concept of these notions has been changing in time, or is changing according to cultures, and each time and each culture prefer mastering of different knowledge, skills and attitudes, in dependence on how the image of the persons considered as cultivated is changing according to shared values and in dependence on the significance given to education (see e.g. Byčkovský, Kotásek 2004; Skalková 2007).

Also at present our culture attaches a great importance to education. The society has nevertheless already for several decades criticized many education systems, including the Czech one, for “education for education”, for its formalism, lack of practicality, its preferring knowledge to skills and for its insufficient encompassing of certain positively accepted habits (for more details see e.g. Singule 1992). In addition, the need of education reform is gaining another dimension in connection with the new EU curricular policy, which is a part of the whole system of measures in view to enhance social development and economic efficiency of the Union adopted in March 2000 in Lisbon as the so-called Lisbon strategy. Implementation of this development concept is at present the principal priority of the European Union. Education systems of all member states should provide education in line with the aims and needs of the European Community, i.e. to increase the quality of human and social capital, and

by that also the competitive advantage of the European Union in the field of global economy, and at the same time to train up to responsibility for the consequences of the behaviour of the society and of the individual within their environment. In this text, we shall try to show possible correlations between education and different types of capital. A deeper attention will be paid to a relatively new and in this context less discussed concept of *social capital*.

## 2. Education as an investment into human capital

Education is in general considered as a process, in which an individual learns the experience of the others.<sup>1</sup> The process of learning is a lifelong process that is not limited to official institutions traditionally connected with education. Already since their childhood individuals learn in all situations and when they imitate activities, often quite common, they see around themselves and which they need to imitate. But not all the aspects of the process of learning can be directly influenced, controlled and monitored.

School is one of the institutions created by the society to ensure its educational needs (Dvořák 2002). In many historical periods, in some social groups or in a certain cultural environment school does not play such an important role as, for instance, in the present western

<sup>1</sup> If we do not take into account the discussion of conceptions, models and forms of learning, i.e. through what, how and where an individual gains experience, for more details see e.g. Průcha (2002), Vališová, Kasíková (2007) and others.

culture<sup>2</sup>. For instance professional training is in many cases ensured by persons directly exercising the given profession, without pedagogical education (e.g. by a foreman mastering his craft, by a hunter) and not through an official institution.

In microeconomics, the term *investments into human capital* is used in connection with the costs of education and professional training. According to Sojka, Konečný (2001: 154), *human capital* brings “income under the form of above-average wages or salaries proportional to its quality and economic activity. Investments into human capital are a sort of capital accumulation manifesting by a higher productivity of labour, innovations or a higher quality of labour and bringing an above-average income.” In other words, an individual, through a system of institutions authorized and accredited to provide educational services, obtains the appropriate qualification, i.e. *educational* or *human capital* which should consequently help him/her to get a corresponding social position and *capital*, both *economic* (real or financial) and *political* (i.e. wealth and power). Therefore, a higher education of members of a society, which should directly ensure the growth of economic capital of individuals and of the whole economy (see below), is considered as one of the important measures for development of the society (especially in economically stronger developed countries).

But the judgement on the role of education system and school in modern society is not always so positive. In sociological thinking, there can be distinguished two basic, mutually contradictory views of the given issue, i.e. the functionalist and the critical (conflict) one (for more details see e.g. Dvořák 2002). According to functionalists, school is an institution increasing the equality of chances and mainly public education gives to young people the chance to get education and consequently such position in the society which corresponds to their abilities and efforts. Public education has to offer to each member of the society knowledge and skills which are important for life in the given society and which he/she can valorize for his/her own benefit, whereas the sum of the successes of individuals is the success of the whole society. On the opposite side, supporters of critical theories based on philosophical ideological orientation called structuralism affirm that school does not give equal changes but, on the contrary, safeguards the differences existing in the society. All learners bring from the environment they live in the so-called *cultural capital* (habits, knowledge, skills, values and attitudes) (see also Bourdieu 1997). Members of disadvantaged social groups, the cultural capital

of which is lower from the perspective of ruling groups, cannot compete with their schoolfellows<sup>3</sup>, which have got the necessary cultural capital and now are valorizing it, i.e. they get also a higher education capital. In such (unjust) social system school does not offer findings and skills profitable to the society as a whole. “Knowledge and culture transmitted at school as “universal” or “national” are in fact a system of such meanings, symbols and views on the world which are those of the dominating group in the society” (Prokop 2005: 14). Members of other groups are then convinced by the system, that their failure and second-rate position are due to their failure at school (Dvořák 2002).

Both above-mentioned ideological streams stress certain system characters and they must be approached as limit values, i.e. the opposite poles of the same reality. To begin with it is not always true, as critical theories affirm, that a member of a social minority could not compete with the majority population, that he could not achieve a higher evaluation, because also various learner’s personal characteristics and predispositions play their role. Ideas of functionalism offering to individuals the opportunity to reach by their own efforts a better social position appear for instance in assistance projects for developing countries and problem areas, which stress investments to education as the major condition for starting economic growth of regions, i.e. for obtaining economic or political capital (see Woolcock, Narayan 2000; www.clovekvtsni.cz, etc.). We do not further consider as well-founded the structural evaluation of symbols and of the systems of values of the dominating social groups a priori as predatory, unjust and unsuitable. For instance the so-called post-materialist value orientation of the society prevailing in some European countries and stressing, differently from the traditional materialist values (economic capital, social security), above all the quality of life (care for environment, interhuman solidarity, respect of human rights, autonomy of self-government, etc.) strives more for mutual cooperation of different social groups and territorial communities than for unilaterally advantageous exploitation of certain group/groups by another/others (for more details see Dostál 2002; 2005).

Points of difference are found also in the functionalist perspective. For instance when considering investments into human capital we hint at the problem of the impossibility to ensure the basic condition, i.e. absolutely equal opportunities. Equality of initial conditions and of a just competition of individuals or regions cannot be guaranteed, if there does not exist public education common to all people on the Earth enabling to all of them to acquire knowledge and skills of the same quality. A really very inegalitarian is the functionalist affirmation that “public education should at the same time form citizens able of responsible decision-making and qualified workers, so that the country as a whole could keep going according to democratic rules and be able to stand the sharp competition existing in the present global economy” (Dvořák

<sup>2</sup> The term “western” is understood as the culture and identity of the European or North-American civilization, propagated and exported to the other parts of the world (for more details see Cole 1996; Huntington 2001).

<sup>3</sup> Often members of different social groups (classes) do not even become schoolfellows, especially at those education levels, where selective choice of learners is done (e.g. through acceptance tests).

2002: 150). Here is predetermined the success and “victory” not of one social class over another, but of one territorial community over another, because an unequal competition will exist there where schools will not form this “type” of workers. Perfect initial conditions do not exist even within one centrally controlled education system of a given territorial unit (e.g. country). In education, perhaps more than anywhere else, very important are such factors as personal conditions, i.e. the personality of the teacher and his/her conception of teaching, managing capacities of the director of this educational institution which influence the character of educational process. There then fully manifest the by structuralist rightly criticized inherited cultural conditionalities, economic specialization of regions and the derived requirements for the average level of education and qualification of the population, i.e. for their human capital (e.g. Massey 1984; Hampl et al. 2001).

Finally even the notion of human capital as a driving force of regional development is not entirely valid. This idea was brought in the 1960s by some neoclassic economists arguing that the society's endowment of educated, trained and healthy workers determined how productively the other potential developing factors could be utilized (Woolcock 2001). Until then neoclassic models of economic growth stressed quantity of *labour* (though skilled) on the detriment of quality, which corresponded to the production process in dominating economic branches of that time. In addition, the volume of production depended on the sufficient quantity of *land*, *financial capital* and also *technology* (*physical capital*). In relation to regional education systems, the model of economic growth presented by neoclassic economists can be nevertheless considered as unjust. If migration of labour represents a mechanism for levelling economic differences among regions, the question is what will happen if educated individuals with their investment in human capital leave the region in which investments into human capital have been made. Education of qualified individuals in itself must not necessarily outline the future economic development of the region. Human capital measured by the highest obtained level of education is then only a personal characteristic of the given individual irrespective of space relations. This problem is stressed mainly in connection with the *brain drain* phenomenon, i.e. departure of educated individuals out of the region, which is typical for economically feeble and structurally affected regions, for which increasing of qualification of population should paradoxically bring the desirable economic development (see e.g. Drbohlav, Uherek 2007).

It ensues from the above-mentioned that, when evaluating the role of education as investment and a certain form of capital accumulation which can be further valorized, it depends much on larger conditionalities of the environment, in which the investment is made. We must differentiate whether it is an economically and politically strong region with diversified resources and forms

of capital, where economic development and increase of the standard of living represent a qualitatively different process than in a region affected by a real shortage and incapacity to satisfy basic needs of its inhabitants. This further influences the way the society thinks of the process of education and what it expects from educational institutions.

### 3. The concept of social capital

Education process is perceived, in relation to the society, mostly as acquisition of knowledge and skills relevant for living in the contemporary society (school adapting) or in the future one (school anticipating), for holding social roles, for performing job. However, these “knowledge and skills relevant for living in society” are changing during the time and vary among cultures. Already since the beginning of the modern pedagogy the specialists have been solving the basic conception problem: the level of cognition is so high and the volume of findings so large that it is not possible for an individual to acquire during his/her life all existing skills and knowledge of humanity. The development of science and technique during the 19<sup>th</sup> century continuing in the 20<sup>th</sup> century by a rapid development of technologies (see Kopačka 2004) has brought a real boom of findings, discoveries and inventions. The social distribution of labour has been thus more and more deepening and orientation of specialists at a given activity must be narrower and narrower for them to be able to take in the knowledge and skills necessary for performing their activities. For mastering other activities it is necessary for different specialists to communicate and exchange opinions how to solve the same problem (going from construction of a house to solving of an environmental crisis), how to ensure a rapid access to information and findings of the others. Beside “*what you know*”, “*to find* (correctly) what you want to know” is important as well.

At last “*who you know*”, it means who yours collaborators are, is today's crucial aphorism (Woolcock, Narayan 2000) that sums up the concept of another form of capital, i.e. *social capital*. Although acquaintances and contacts (mainly with economically and politically powerful persons) have been important during the whole history of humanity, the concept of social capital does not stress the unilateral importance of an acquaintance for obtaining certain advantages for an individual (e.g. through allowances from obligations or through a preferential right to certain economic goods), but the existence of reciprocal<sup>4</sup> social network through which it is possible to reach more effective outputs. Because the output is more rewarding

<sup>4</sup> Even supporters of individual theoretic concepts of social capital do not agree whether reciprocity of relations is a quality and condition of social capital (for more details see e.g. Šafr, Sedláčková 2006).

when suppliers, colleagues and clients alike are able to combine their particular skills and resources in a spirit of co-operation and commitment to common objectives (Woolcock 2001).

The concept of social capital was originated in sociology and is being widely incorporated into much current social science. Ideas of improvement of living conditions for whole community via efficient social networks and community participation appeared in sociological papers already at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (e.g. Hanifan 1916, quoted in Woolcock, Narayan 2000). But only the description of problems by terms used by economists in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (issues how people capitalise on their social relationships to obtain access to economic and other desired resources) and publishing of fundamental works by Bourdieu (1977, reprinted 2000; 1980, quoted in Astone et al. 1999) and Coleman (1988) is considered as the beginning of an intensive research in this field. However, a person who has popularized the concept most of all is Putnam (1993, quoted in Woolcock, Narayan 2000; compare Putnam 2001), whose work stimulated further research activities (e.g. Hall 1999).

While the concept of social capital is relatively new, its using suffers from fuzziness and inconsistency. Some authors consider social capital only as one sort of capital and assign it qualities of the capital described in economics. According to Samuelson (1976, quoted in Astone et al. 1999: 3) the “*capital* is an input to economic production, which is distinguished from other inputs (e.g. land or labour) by the fact that a capital input is itself an output of a prior productive process.” Like Samuelson (1976), Bourdieu (1977, reprinted 2000) defines capital as a resource, which is both produced and potentially productive, unlike Samuelson, he explicitly incorporates into his definition the Marxist idea that the raw material that produces a capital resource is always, at its ultimate origin, human labour (Astone et al. 1999, compare Bourdieu 1977, reprinted 2000). Nevertheless the essence of the Bourdieu’s tract on social capital does not consist in reflections how to express social networks and social cohesion through the form of economic capital, how to convert their value to measurable variables used in economics, i.e. mainly to finances. Just on the contrary, Bourdieu during his sociological research into the North-Africa desert tribe of Kabyls found a society, where the significance of economic capital was replaced by quite different values – the basic economic transaction there is gift and from this transaction is derived the entire functioning of this society based on an extremely complicated network of reciprocal social relations (Bourdieu 2000; Možný 1999). Bourdieu could therefore come to the conclusion that different types of capital are, to a large degree, interchangeable and transformable, because thinking in the intentions of purely economic capital is lacking in the Kabyl society. Research conclusions cannot be thus transferred, for instance, into the context of the present western culture, although it frequently happens.

Other authors, leaving out of consideration economic definitions of capital, understand the term of social capital very broadly with consequences to which social network and collective action lead to, as trust, altruism, social cohesion, regional consciousness, etc. This conception of social capital is contradictory to general economic principles of capital, as “economists distinguish the acquisition of capital resources from the acquisition of other things; the former is referred to as investment, the latter as consumption” (Astone et al. 1999: 5).

A relatively concise and complex definition of social capital is given e.g. by Hall (1999: 418): “the social networks generated by [...] patterns of sociability constitute an important form of ‘social capital’ in the sense that they increase the trust that individuals feel towards others and enhance their capacity to join together in collective action to resolve common problems or to ensure that governments address such problems.” Woolcock, Narayan (2000: 226) prefer a more general definition which mostly focuses on the sources of social capital: “(It) refers to the norms and networks that enable people to act collectively.” A comprehensive outline of further definitions of social capital is given in the Czech literature e.g. by Ptáček (2001), the up-to-now most extensive summary of various aspects of the given problems is the paper by Šafir, Sedláčková (2006) or Pileček (2010).

#### 4. Education as an investment in social capital

However, in some areas of social science this concept has not been adopted yet, which is true for many countries (including Czechia) for sciences about education. Although there is a very strong association (and also statistical correlation) between higher education and measures of social capital, suggesting public investment in education may be one level that governments might use to strengthen social capital (Hall 1999; Putnam 2001), the term “an investment in social capital” is not yet currently used. An important obstacle to this investment is probably the rather “vague” ownership of social capital, when many specialists assume that differently from human capital, social capital is a property of groups rather than the property of individuals (Schuller 2001; Pileček, Jančák 2010). In the traditional conception of teaching, it is then problematic to control and especially to evaluate mastering of social capital, if it is bound to individuals, as it takes its significance only when connected to a larger group. Inspiring in this sense are such forms of teaching as cooperative education (for more details see Kasíková 2007), introduced into practice in educationally developed countries (the term used for example by Obst 2002, p. 106).

According to Kasíková (2007), education can be in principle organized, from the perspective of social relations, in three ways: competitive, individual and cooperative. Although the proportion of time allocated to

these ways of education should be theoretically 20% : 20% : 60%, for instance in Czech schools cooperation is at present rather rare, in the past it was largely underestimated, so that competition is clearly dominating. In the competitive way of education, activities of pupils are in negative correlation in relation to the aim, i.e. success of one is necessarily connected with failure of another; it is not an activity done together, but by one against another. On the contrary, the principle of cooperative education is cooperation in reaching aims; results of an individual are backed by the activity of the whole group of pupils and the whole group benefits from the activity of an individual. Here we have a positive correlation, when the whole group is appreciated for the results of the work.

In relation to the capital, the competitive way of education can lead above all to a certain level of human capital for individuals, while cooperation can, beside human capital for the individual, effectively gain the social capital as well. Then it is not necessary to distinguish whether the property belongs to a group or to an individual, as without groups and each individual it could not be gained. It depends more how other consequences of the gains are evaluated, whether we choose to focus on the personal network (ego-centred network) or rather a whole network approach (to study an entire bounded population) (Mailfert 2007). Since the social capital can be linked to economic performance (productivity) at very different levels – at the level of nation states, at the regional level or between and within communities or organizations and also be measured as a profit for an individual who joins with such community.

In the contemporary world characterized by a high cohesion, interconnections and more frequent interactions among different people and groups, school should put a stress on learning communication and teamwork skills, tolerance and compromise, etc., at least to the same degree as to acquiring fundamental professional findings and experience. For Schuller (2001), communication and teamwork skills are two of the most universally acknowledged competences for a modern economy. These can be interpreted at a basic practical level, where productive efficiency requires good communication among work group members. But the same message applies at other levels, where a professional community depends for its success on trust and openness of information sharing. Although these skills are appreciated mainly in institutional economics (differently from Keynesianism or Marxism and Neo-Marxism), the present regional policy in economically developed countries stresses them the most frequently and builds on them prospective measures for regional development – support of the so-called local incentives, support for generation and diffusion of innovations, etc. (for more details see Blažek, Uhlíř 2002).

But through education it is possible to develop also another dimension of social capital which can (not necessarily) consequently influence economic growth of the region and which is in fact a source and a product of

social capital: social cohesion. In a certain perspective, activities of school in this field are indispensable. Much of what used to be provided in the western society, still some one or two hundred years ago, exclusively by the family or by a closed community, is today wanted from schools to train. This is true not only for manual skills, knowledge of regional history and formation of regional/local consciousness, the family in today's western culture often does not even perform its basic emotional, educational and socialization function (Sullerotová 1998; Maříková ed. 2000; and others). The first place where a child starts with his/her socialization and where he/she becomes fully conscious of his/her identity, can be now school (Tonucci, 1994). It would be thus desirable that school met requirements necessary for formation of social capital from the perspective of functions of voluntary associations (Hall 1999, s. 420): "First, they should involve their members in at least some face-to-face interaction with others, a factor of importance since it is from such interaction that the capacity for generalized reciprocity is said to follow. Secondly, they should engage their members in common endeavour, thereby nurturing capacities for collective action rather than simply self-help." These are again arguments for a progressively increasing inclusion of cooperation into education.

Schools, especially the basic, general ones, have also the potential to develop specific type of social cohesion, i.e. regional social cohesion, also regional consciousness or regional identity of the inhabitants (for more details see Paasi 1986; compare Chromý 2003). The significance of regional consciousness for functioning of a society and for regional development is now often in the centre of attention in connection with new approaches in regional geography, the so-called new regional geography, or with institutional orientations in economics and regional policy as well as with the interest in problems of identities in social sciences in general (see e.g. Paasi 1986, 2002; Maskell, Malmberg 1999; Raagmaa 2002; in Czechia e.g. Chromý, Janů 2003; Chromý, Kučerová, Kučera 2009; Jeřábek 2007; Klusáková, Ellis eds. 2006; Zich ed. 2003, etc.). Research shows that identity of inhabitants for sustainable economic growth or social and cultural development of the region is not sufficient, nevertheless in combination with the competitive strength in innovations, different forms of learning (see Lundvall, Johnson 1994), i.e. in human capital, and with the existing networks, i.e. social capital, there appears in the region a significant cumulative effect of positive development aspects. Conscious inhabitants of a region then can, when building further contacts, personal, economic or politic, act in behalf of the region and as a part of the community, which may bring material and immaterial profits thanks to formation of a positive image of the region (so-called identity of the region by Paasi 1986). It is necessary to get aware of the fact, often neglected in regional development strategies, that only links without one's own community bring new impulses and become opportunities for

regional development, in whatever sense we understand it, as an enlargement of sales or as cultural enrichment (when conceived both positive or negative).

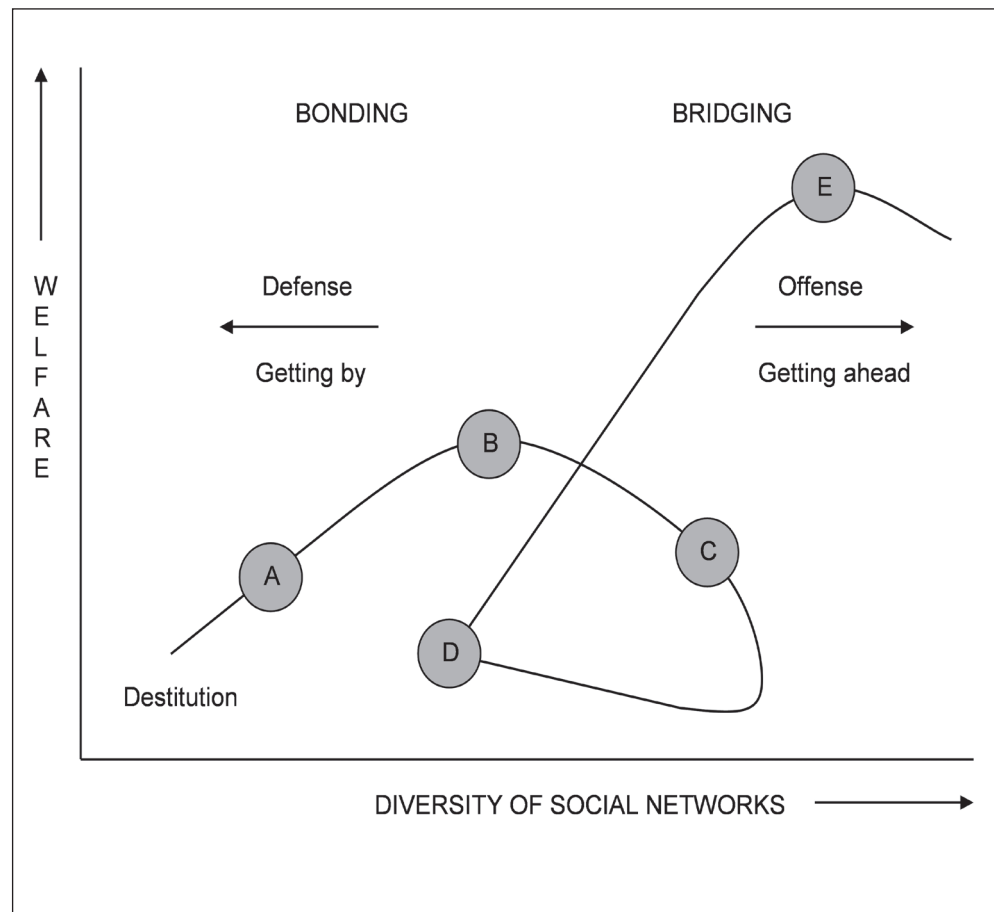
In this connection we must stress that there is no single form of social capital, but this issue has a multiple dimension. The most common and popular distinction is between ‘bonding’, ‘bridging’ and ‘linking’ social capital (Woolcock, Narayan 2000; compare Šafr, Sedláčková 2006; Das 2003; Mailfert 2007). Bonding social capital refers to the relations within homogeneous groups, sharing often similar demographic characteristics, such as families, close friends, ethnic enclaves or neighbours. The ties connecting the members are strong and provide important emotional and also material benefits. The primary function of these networks is to reduce risk and uncertainty (so called *solidarity networks*). Bridging social capital connects in horizontal way different types of people and groups as more distant friends, associates and colleagues. The people have comparable social and economic status or political power, but different demographic, ethnic and geographical backgrounds. These ties are open and flexible and they are typical of business and others formal relations. The purpose of such *innovation networks* is to share knowledge about technology, know-how, to enhance productivity and profit. Linking social capital is similar to bridging, but connects individuals and groups vertically to others in so called higher economically, socially or politically more powerful positions. It is often stressed that social capital should be reciprocal (see footnote 4), i.e. mutual benefit for both connected parties; therefore it is necessary to distinguish linking social capital from the mere unilateral abusing of acquaintances for one’s own enrichment. It can be understood as correlation core – periphery or controlling – controlled, when also periphery (subordinated surroundings) is important for its core, it offers it certain advantages and at the same time is not only exploited by the core (Havlíček, Chromý, Jančák, Marada 2005). Nevertheless other theoretical concepts of social capital contest such intergroup reciprocity. For instance, the in the Marxist way conceived Bourdieu’s (1980) social capital is only another of capitals exclusively owned by the dominant social class, i.e. instrument for reproduction of this class on the detriment of the others (Field 2003; compare Šafr, Sedláčková 2006). Reciprocity of relations is for Bourdieu a basis for functioning of social capital, but only within one social rank.

Although all the three above-mentioned dimensions of social capital are important for a sound functioning of a society, primary for the very moment of starting the prosperity of a region are bridging or linking relations. World Bank’s evidence from the developing world (see more Woolcock, Narayan 2000) demonstrates that merely having high levels of social solidarity or informal groups does not necessarily lead to economic prosperity. Intensive bonding social capital can leverage poor community to *get by* (that is defensive strategy), but only more

extensive bridging or linking social capital enables it to *get ahead* (offensive strategy). By their linking to a hierarchically higher network of relations, an individual, a community or a region find new resources and new impulsions, although, at the same time they are exposed to the menace of a stronger competition. In spite of that, as stressed e.g. by Hampl (1998), it is important to remain a part of the system, would it be on a feeble and disadvantageous position, and thus avoid isolation.

Affirmations about the impossibility to reach economic prosperity with the help of the comparative advantage of another type of capital seem at the first sight to be in contradiction with the above ideas of economists and sociologists developing Bourdieu’s statement that different types of capitals are to a large degree interchangeable and transformable. But we have already mentioned that Bourdieu when distinguishing three types of capital – economic, cultural and social – considered rather general issues of functioning of a society and different types of the system of values than the direct creating of economic capital. Moreover, his conception of social capital is dominantly aimed at the position of an individual in social structures and on his more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition, representing for the given individual actual or potential resources. Also for Coleman (1988) community ties were important for the benefits they yielded to *individuals*. The “celebration” of a *community* and regional identity in connection with the concept of social capital began to appear in amplification of the above mentioned ideas only in papers of scholars in many other disciplines, where social capital became an attribute of the community itself. This inaccuracy has its origin in substitution of one of the possible attributes of the community for its indispensable part. Silk (1999: 8) states: “Community suggests any or all of the following: common needs and goals, a sense of the common good, shared lives, culture and views of the world, and collective action.” Collective action is at the same time considered as a product of social capital (see above Hall 1999; Woolcock, Narayan 2000). Another problem is, that “community” is a social and not spatial/geographical category which is primarily integrated by interpersonal links, so that it can, but must not, have its territorial base. Geographical conceptualization of social networks and social capital was done e.g. by Holt (2008); Lin (2001, 2008), in Czechia by Sýkora, Matoušek (2009); Jančák, Havlíček, Chromý, Marada (2008). If they are not (in this sense) geographical and territorially anchored categories, thus social capital, social networks, communities and regional consciousness must not territorially coincide in the given space and therefore there must not exist spatial relations between their intensities and their growth must not condition the overall economic development of a given region.

Such situation is shown by the concise diagram by Woolcock, Narayan (2000) (see Fig. 1). The model is based on the results of Grameen Bank’s group-based



**Fig. 1** Social Capital and Poverty Transitions  
Source: Woolcock, Narayan (2000: 232)

credit program in Bangladesh. It describes an event when a group of poor village women was given a loan, which helped them start a small shared business. This improved their families' welfare (point A), but in the course of time the economic returns reached a limit (B). Then the group continued to expand through the arrival of others members of village community and its resources became overwhelmed and founder members' well-being was thereby reducing (C). In these circumstances the poor women divested themselves of their immediate community ties (D) and found a potentially more diverse network out of the community which gave them another chance (E). The migration from villages to cities is the most dramatic example of solving such situation of poor people.

The above example describes the event from the perspective of the personal network of the poor women and does not say anything about consequent benefits and losses in communities which have lost or on the contrary have gained new members, in case of migration then on regions of arrival of departure of migrants. It can be said that the point D generally appears as disadvantageous from the perspective of both personal network (micro) and whole network (macro) approach, although it is exactly the point of transition of bonding social capital to bridging one. In case that such radical severing of existing links has not occurred and an individual has transformed these relations into regional consciousness,

into his/her regional identity, he/she could at the same time increase the welfare of his/her home region and the diversity of his/her social networks could be still higher. Under other circumstances, the point C could be left out and the point E would be only another non-conflicting continuation of personal network developing (see e.g. the working class's and the middle class's different strategies of networking after their moving to a large urban area described by Hall (1999)). In direct connection to education, it is possible to see a parallel to Fig. 1. Consider, for instance, a situation, in which a young member of a local society goes to an entirely new environment away from home to study (from a rural area to a city or from an economically developing country to a developed country) (point A). In the new location, he or she makes new personal and professional relationships and new opportunities become available to him/her (B). After completing studies elsewhere, graduates often struggle to find a position, in which they can apply their newly acquired knowledge, skills and contacts, in their initial place of residence (C). Consequently, in order to avoid the devaluation (failure to utilise) of their investments into studying (D), many choose migration to places, where their qualifications are in demand (E). Higher education then, yet again, presents a double-edged sword: although it should aid in the development of a disadvantaged region, it leads instead to the "brain

drain” effect, described above. It follows, therefore, that it the most advantageous situation for a community, even in such a case, is one in which educated individuals are not forced to work out their life situation by breaking old ties, and instead become a source of aid to the initial disadvantaged area through their activities in a different area.

It does not clearly ensue from the above-mentioned facts whether investment into social capital is beneficial for the economic prosperity of the region, or for the local community, or even for the society as a whole. Differently from the concept of human capital, which suggests a direct linear model: investment is made, in time or money, and economic returns follow, social capital has a much less linear approach, its returns are less easily definable and it is harder to specify what kinds of return might be expected, and by when (Schuller 2001). Moreover, the benefits from this investment are often available only to those inside the networks, not to the local/regional society as a whole. In spite of that education should represent an investment in different forms of social capital both in making bonds to regional community, formation of regional identity and learning to making contacts, networking, since such complexity of benefits and returns is closer to the real world in comparison to an ideal linear model of human capital.

## 5. Conclusion

The aim of this article is to evaluate the process of education as an instrument enabling an individual to acquire certain competencies (a kind of capital), which, when used in an active way, may help him/her to reach different personal benefits, or even benefits for the whole society in a given territory. *Human capital*, i.e. acquired knowledge and skills, is traditionally considered as an important factor of societal and regional development and therefore the main measures taken are usually investments into education strengthening these cognitive domains<sup>5</sup>.

An increasing role is however played by realization of the importance of social networks, integration of subjects in these networks for obtaining a large spectrum of further benefits. The potential of using the systems of relations for reaching a certain objective, or sometimes the product itself of a collective action in a network, has been recently called *social capital*. Its ownership or sharing is not implicit, although each human is integrated in some, at least minimal, network of interpersonal relations. The amount of social capital for an individual and for the whole network depends on many characteristics of the social network: on its size (absolute number of

its members), density, structural characteristics (social position, education, age, profession, etc. of participating individuals), intimacy, trust and reciprocity of relations. But also on qualities of the environment, in which the given network operates, on redistribution of benefits within the network, on other external links of the network. Therefore a needful part of education should be to teach people skills helping them to integrate themselves into such networks, to form and use them, but not to their unilateral clientelistic profit. At the time we are getting aware of the positive signification of cooperation and division of labour among the parts of a whole for reaching a common goal, it is useful for people to acquire also attitudes and values necessary for a sound functioning of the network: responsibility for his/her actions, the principle of reciprocity of relations, cooperation, which means activities together and not against one another, where all must at the same time be aware of the risk that the group must share not only success, but also failure.

The problem is that in spite of the fact that the modern conception and project curricular documents (e.g. documents based on the EU Treaty of Lisbon) stress the principles of cooperation, cohesion, equal opportunity and solidarity, the process of education and the system of education in western democratic societies is in principle competitive. “Democratization of education opportunities has depended on the individuation of success and failure. [...] In educational systems based on choice and competition, resources follow students on the assumption that students will be attracted to the most successful institutions. Less successful institutions as indicated by league tables will suffer a decline in student numbers while the more successful will attract an increase, and funding will be regulated accordingly” (Brown, Halsey, Lauder, Wells 1997: 10–11).

As education systems are national, we can state that democratization of educational opportunities practiced in this way and investments into education strengthening human and social capital for economic development of regions are important and are understood as such only at international level as strengthening of the competitive strength of states of regional groupements (e.g. the European Union) on the global market. A problem appears when education is used as an instrument of regional development within one state, within one education system. Although the intention may be to help the disadvantaged (economically, socially, culturally, etc.), the curriculum operates primarily in the whole area and also the education reform will have an impact on all regions, i.e. on the “feeble” as well as on the “strong” ones. We can thus presume that the reform of curriculum carried out to strengthen social capital will be the most successful in areas, where the social capital will be the strongest already before the reform. The question is, to which regions on the scale “feeble” – “strong” the reform will help the most.

<sup>5</sup> Categorization of cognitive processes, domains and aims see e.g. Byčkovský, Kotásek 2004; Čáp, Mareš 2001; Řezníčková 2003.



In spite of all controversial and contradictory findings about investment into the human and the social capital and the role of education in these processes, it will be always true, as stated by Kvalsund (2001, p. 1), that “a school may provide a means to move out of the community for some young people, but also be an arena for recruitment of those who will develop and maintain the local community and its region.”

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## RÉSUMÉ

### Získávání různých druhů kapitálu prostřednictvím vzdělávání

Vzdělávání je nástroj umožňující jedinci osvojit si určité kompetence (znalosti, dovednosti, jednání), jejichž aktivní užívání mu může přinést nejrůznější osobní zisky (kapitál), případně i kapitál pro celou společnost na určitém území. Cílem tohoto článku je diskutovat jednotlivé druhy kapitálu, které lze prostřednictvím procesu vzdělávání získat, a zhodnotit jejich přínos pro jedince a rozvoj společnosti, případně regionální/lokální rozvoj.

Tradičně bývá za významný faktor rozvoje považován tzv. lidský kapitál, tedy znalosti a dovednosti, které vlastní jedinci. Proto se za hlavní opatření považují investice do vzdělávání posilujícího tyto kognitivní domény. Nicméně názor na školu jako instituci zvyšující rovnost šancí jedinců i regionálních společenství, a umožňující tak rozvoj, není jednoznačný. V sociologickém myšlení lze rozlišit dva základní, vzájemně protikladné pohledy na danou problematiku, a to funkcionalistický a kritický/konfliktní. Podle funkcionalistů je škola institucí, která zvyšuje rovnost šancí, a zejména veřejné školství poskytuje mladým lidem příležitost získat vzdělání a poté společenské postavení, které odpovídá jejich schopnostem a úsilí. Veřejné školství má zprostředkovat každému členovi společnosti poznatky a dovednosti důležité pro život v dané společnosti, které může zhodnotit ve svůj prospěch, přičemž sumou úspěchů jednotlivců je úspěch celé společnosti. Proti tomu stoupenci kritických teorií tvrdí, že škola nedává rovné příležitosti, ale naopak udržuje rozdíly ve společnosti. Každý si z prostředí, v němž žije, přináší tzv. kulturní kapitál (návyky, dovednosti, hodnoty). Příslušníci znevýhodněných společenských skupin, jejichž kulturní kapitál je z pohledu vládnoucích vrstev nižší, však nemohou konkurovat

spolužákům, kteří získali požadovaný kulturní kapitál a nyní jej zhodnocují, tj. dosahují i vyššího vzdělanostního kapitálu. V takovém (nespravedlivém) společenském systému tedy nenabízí škola poznatky a dovednosti prospěšné společnosti jako celku.

Méně často se již v souvislosti se vzděláváním hovoří o investicích do tzv. sociálního kapitálu. Právě na diskusi o tomto druhu kapitálu a jeho dosud málo využívaném potenciálu ve vzdělávacím procesu se zaměřuje náš článek.

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