



Stefan M. Kwiatkowski

Akademia Pedagogiki Specjalnej im. Marii Grzegorzewskiej w Warszawie

ORCID 0000-0001-6312-2732

Outline of the concept of the educational capital transfer

Zarys koncepcji transferu kapitału edukacyjnego

Abstract: The article presents an outline of the author's concept of the transfer of educational capital. In particular, attention was paid to the essence of this type of transfer and to its individual and group dimensions. The concepts of conscious and unconscious transfer were introduced and in this context analyzes were made taking into account formal and informal education. The conditions for effective transfer were indicated, and the necessity to properly prepare teachers, lecturers and employers to share knowledge, skills and social competences was emphasized.

Keywords: educational capital, intra-group transfer, intergroup transfer.

Introduction

The concept of capital is most often associated with the economy considered in economic terms. In this context, by capital we mean all resources (productive forces: raw materials, materials, machinery, land, financial resources) which, when placed on the market, create an opportunity for profit for their owner. Capital can therefore be multiplied, through sound investments, but also lost in certain situations. It is also convertible in purchase – sale transactions – in relations characterizing the market economy. In other words, capital is a **resource** that can be **multiplied** and **exchangeable** for other goods (objects and services).

With reference to the economic definition of capital presented above, the concept of educational capital can be analyzed. It is important to

emphasize that the resource of this type of capital are the knowledge, skills and social competences of the individual, as well as social groups, and as a result – the whole of society. It is undoubtedly a capital that is multiplied and exchanged for other goods, such as: access to appropriate schools/universities, satisfying work, high earnings, as well as prestige and social recognition.

However, there is one basic difference between capital in the economic sense and educational capital. It results from the fact that the latter, except in extraordinary situations (e.g. neurological disease), is not lost. On the contrary, it is, as already mentioned, multiplied. In fact, in the lifelong process of learning, knowledge, skills and social competences are constantly enriched by individual motivation and, what is important for further considerations, by the exchange between individuals and social groups. This exchange has the characteristics of **the transfer of educational capital**, i.e. mutual sharing of one's educational resources (Kwiatkowski, S. M., 2021, pp. 67-80).

The essence of the transfer of educational capital

Educational capital, with limited access to economic capital, is a major factor in economic and social development. This statement underlies further analysis of the importance of an effective transfer of this type of capital.

The transfer of educational capital is an objective phenomenon – occurring independently from individual and social consciousness. Regardless of the awareness of which we are talking, all of us take part in the continuous exchange of knowledge, skills and social competences between individuals and social groups. This exchange can be **unconscious** (involuntary) or **conscious** – corresponding to a deliberate, planned and organized transfer.

Unconscious transfer occurs most often in the process of non-formal education, during various social and professional relationships. It manifests itself in the involuntary acquisition of the elements of knowledge and skills from other people, as well as imitation (also involuntary) of their behavior. A classic example of unconscious transfer is the flow of knowledge, skills and social competences between parents and children, especially at a younger age (see: Stiffelman, 2015). This is usually a **one-way** transfer: from parent to child. Even if parents appreciate the importance of the transmission of educational capital, and more broadly – social capital, it is not a planned and organized message, but rather situational – resulting from the questions asked by children, as well as from the willingness of parents to support the development of their offspring. Similar features are typical for an educational transfer occurring between an older and younger sibling or between a child

and a his/hers peer group. In the latter cases, we can already talk about **reverse** transfer – about mutual learning. It is worth noting here that with the development of children's educational capital, parents also learn from them in an involuntarily way. This applies not only to new information technologies and the sphere of popular culture, but also to ecological and climate awareness and everyday experiences manifested in the style of communication.

Looking from a pedagogical point of view, it is difficult to overestimate the role of the unconscious transfer of educational capital in the period preceding the process of formal education – school and then academic. By analogy with the initial capital accumulated by insurance institutions, it can be said that children enter the school with a very specific **initial** (base) **educational capital** gained through relationships with parents and the wider family circle and with their peers who have common interests and passions. Of course, the initial educational capital is very diverse. Its level depends on the parent's education, the time devoted to the child, the proper diagnosis of its needs, as well as on the elusive climate of mutual support prevailing in the nearest environment – both family and social.

The diversified educational capital of children starting formal education is a theoretical problem and a practical challenge for the entire education system. In the theoretical sense, it is about answering the following question: whether the school, especially the primary school, is to be a place meant to equalize the levels of educational capital of individual students, or whether it should present a diversified educational offer taking into account the different seeds of the initial educational capital? The first approach fosters the development of educational opportunities, while the second leads to the deepening of initial differences and creates the risk of educational marginalization. The practical challenge, for the widely accepted first approach, is to create the conditions for schools to become platforms for the multilateral transfer of educational capital, i.e. the exchange of knowledge, skills and social competences between teachers and pupils (including the reverse transfer) and between students. It is important to note that nothing stands in the way of including parents cooperating with the school (see: Porter, 2008; Grolnick and Raftery-Helmer, 2015) and its natural social environment in the process of mutual transfer of educational capital.

In practice, the phenomenon of differences in the level of educational capital of pupils and then graduates in primary schools occurs on a daily basis. This is evidenced indirectly by the diversification of the level of educational offer within public and non-public schools, as well as between schools and of the same status.

Both the first and the second approach is characterized by conscious transfer, i.e. a planned and organized flow of knowledge, skills and social competences. In both approaches, there is also – in different proportions – involuntary transfer based mainly on the adaptation of certain social competences.

The continuation of conscious transfer takes place in secondary schools and universities, as well as in various types of courses, trainings and workshops. It's a continuation of the process of formal education initiated in primary schools. Along with the transition to the next stages of formal education, the relationships between teacher/lecturer and pupil/student change. Students gradually shift from being passive recipients of the teachers educational capital to becoming not only its active recipients, but also co-creators within their classroom. This is possible thanks to the increasingly effective assimilation of the knowledge, skills and social competences provided by teachers, as well as independent learning – searching, collecting and transforming the elements of educational capital obtained from other sources. In this way, pupils, and of course, students, become partners of their teachers/lecturers. In certain teaching situations, they can share their educational capital not only with their peers from their class or student group, but also with teachers and lecturers (we encounter this primarily in post-secondary schools and part-time studies – in the case of students who already have experience gained during their professional work).

After the end of the formal education period, the transfer of educational capital occurs in the work environment and after the end of professional activity (Kwiatkowski, S. M., 2022b, pp. 141-150). It is primarily an unconscious transfer, possibly with a small component of planning and organization (in native conditions only about 5% of the employees participate annually in the organized forms of adult education).

The educational capital acquired in the process of formal education is subject to a kind of evaluation as part of recruitment procedures for specific work positions. Appropriate bodies, acting under the authority of the employer, assess – on the basis of a document certifying the obtained professional qualifications and the interviews with candidates for work (less often on the basis of the so-called trial work, i.e. demonstrating the ability to perform professional tasks) – the level of their knowledge, skills and professional competences. In this case, it is about both the general (integrated) level and the level of individual components. It is necessary to emphasize that the general level does not always differentiate the candidates. Greater importance is given to the separately considered levels of knowledge, skills

and social competences. In the realities of the polish labor market, employers attach particular importance to skills and social competences. This is due to the fact that this market is dominated by micro-enterprises (employing up to 10 people), and their owners are looking for an employee who – from the first day of employment – are ready to take up production or service tasks. This does not mean that the level of knowledge is marginalized, but among the employers prevails an opinion according to which knowledge can be supplemented more easily and quickly than acquiring of new skills and social competences (Kwiatkowski, S. M., 2006, pp. 5-11).

Regardless of the size and economic situation of a given enterprise, the employee in the process of development of his educational capital is, first of all, on his own. Therefore, he should properly diagnose (evaluate) his individual level of knowledge, skills and social competences and think about methods of raising the level of each of these components (only in macro enterprises – few on the labor market – he can count on specialist personnel consulting) – of course already as part of non-formal education. The effect of the self-diagnosis of educational capital contributed to the enterprise understood in this way is (or rather should be) the search in one's immediate surroundings for people with the highest general level, but above all with the highest level of skills and social competences. It goes without saying that the educational transfer is the more effective the greater is the difference in the levels of its components considered from the point of view of the new worker and the master in the profession.

As already mentioned, unconscious transfer plays a fundamental role in the process of non-formal education. It begins in the closest family and then occurs with less intensity during school and academic education, which in turn is characterized by a high proportion of conscious transfer. The unconscious transfer takes place in the process of professional work and after the end of this stage of life.

The main elements of unconscious transfer during this period are:

- observation of the behavior of other members of the society, including the co-workers and the employers,
- observation of different work and life styles and relationships between professional work and personal life (in the nearest and distant environment),
- observation of performed activities during the implementation of professional tasks (from simple to complex activities),

- attentive listening to the statements and comments of the employees with a longer seniority and greater professional and life experience.

In particular, it is important to:

- observation of the behavior of co-workers in a situation of stress, conflict and various types of negotiations,
- observation of the activities of the co-workers during the implementation of tasks requiring solving the technological, economic and organizational problems

Conscious transfer present in the process of professional work and after its completion, unfortunately occurring only marginally, requires planning and providing conditions (place, time, necessary financial resources) for:

- periodic meetings of employees with a short internship and little experience with masters in the profession, also with former employees who previously performed key functions in the company, freedom to ask questions,
- sharing their insights,
- presenting original solutions to various types of problems (also by former employees),
- unrestricted exchange of thoughts and views,
- taking notes and photographic (film) documentation.

It is worth noting that in the process of formal education (school, university) in the first place we are dealing with a conscious transfer of knowledge and an unconscious transfer of social competences. The transfer of skills (generally conscious) occurs with a certain time delay – during exercises, laboratory classes and professional practices. This shift can and usually causes a rupture of the bonds that should occur between theory (knowledge) and practice (skills) in the didactic process. Ideally, the transfer of knowledge and skills should be carried out parallelly, without any factually unjustified delays. In addition, in many cases it is advisable to start learning with a transfer of skills, so as to motivate students to independently search (as soon as possible) for the knowledge necessary to explain certain implementation procedures.

In the process of non-formal education, the transfer (conscious and unconscious) of skills and social competences plays a leading role. This is particularly evident in the working environment, in which employers put the level of skills of the employee (production sphere) and the level of their social competences (service sphere) in the foreground due to economic considerations.

Transfer of individual and group educational capital

The previous considerations have mainly concerned **individual educational capital** and its transfer. This capital, i.e. knowledge, skills and social competences, are a personal feature of every member of the society. It is collected and multiplied, as well as transferred throughout the life of the individual. Its general level and the levels of its components are conditioned by the active presence of other people participants (co-participants) in the process of education and upbringing, as well as the process of professional work.. Along with the prolongation of the period of human life, these conditions are also connected with the persons who accompany us in spending time free from occupational. We can therefore conclude that an individual's educational capital is the result of his/hers own accomplishments and the benefits of his/hers relationship with other people. That is why so much importance is attached to the educational, and more broadly speaking, upbringing, functions of the family, and then the educational and professional environment. The transfer of individual educational capital takes place within the framework of the following relationships:

- individual – individual,
- individual – group.

Individual – individual relationships do not have to take place between members of the same group, although this is the most common case. The strength of this relationship depends on the level of differences between individuals in terms of knowledge, skills and social competences. These differences are much greater among those belonging to different ethnic groups (intercultural transfer), as well as social, professional and age groups (intergenerational transfer), having different interests, experience and views on the surrounding reality (Kwiatkowski, S. M., 2022a, pp. 414-424).

More complex, but also of greater social importance, are the relationships: individual – group. These can be the aforementioned relations: individual – individual, but also: individual – subgroup and finally: individual – group. Depending on the size of the group, the individual enters into relations either with the subgroup(s) or with the whole group. It also happens that in the groups consisting of smaller number of members, there are subgroups present that differ in their approach to learning and work, style of behavior, or preferences in terms of fashion and leisure. Furthermore, much depends on whether the individual feels and is perceived by others as an entrenched member of a given group, or whether he/she functions in it as a novice seeking acceptance of a new environment.

In each of the cases highlighted above, the transfer of individual educational capital proceeds differently. It is therefore difficult to point at any common features of this type of transfer. It can only be seen that in a situation in which individuals, for various reasons, are not willing to transfer - they study, work and spend their free time individually - **group educational capital** is the sum of individual capital. This is a feature of disintegrated, inconsistent and groups not focused on joint implementation of tasks. Their opposite are groups that are integrated, consistent and focused on the implementation of commonly accepted tasks. Then the group educational capital is the sum of individual capitals strengthened (multiplied) thanks to the network of relationships occurring between the members of the group. There are many examples of how group educational capital conditions economic and social success. In addition, positive relationships between group members have a decisive influence on their performance in other areas of life, e.g. in all kinds of teamwork, in which the individual capital or their sum is not sufficient to achieve success – it is also necessary to have a proper relationship (network of relations) between the members of the group (Putnam, 2008, pp. 33, 35; see: Brackett, Reyes, Rivers, Elbertson and Salovey, 2011, pp. 27-28; Kwiatkowski, S. T., 2021, pp. 127-133, 137-148).

The achievement of proper, i.e. positive, relationships, and in fact a network of relations, is possible only in the conditions of mutual trust, loyalty, reciprocity and solidarity between the individuals forming the group. Particular importance is attached to trust, i.e. an attitude towards the members of the group assuming that nothing bad will happen to us on their part.. In this definitional convention, trust is a fundamental element of all relationships – interpersonal ties. By placing our trust in group members, we believe that sharing our individual educational capital with them will not result with depriving us of the authorship of our thoughts, taking over and appropriating the results of our research, procedures for shaping skills and social competences. In other words, we expect from them loyalty and proof that our trust is a kind of commitment for them. It can be fulfilled through reciprocity in the process of sharing the components of educational capital. Trust and the loyalty and reciprocity that build it are the foundation of solidarity, understood as a community that cares for the welfare of others - members of the group (Kwiatkowski, S. M., 2016, pp. 66-70; Sztompka, 2016, pp. 150-153).

The level of trust, followed by the loyalty, reciprocity and group solidarity, determines – to a decisive extent – the quality of relations within the group. At the same time, it should be noted that the lack of trust, as well as

loyalty, reciprocity and solidarity, results in the rupture or at least weakening of these relations and, as a result, the marginalization of the importance of the moral bond between the group members.

Comparing the transfer of educational capital within the group (**intra-group transfer**) and between groups (**intergroup transfer**), we estimate that the former usually takes place under conditions of stronger relations. This is the result of relationships of an emotional nature, fully understood in the family, ethnic group, school class and student group, as well as in the group of employers and employees. The transfer within entire professional groups is specific and very significant - especially visible among lawyers, doctors, economists and teachers. This is largely related to the natural assessment of the level of knowledge, skills and social competences of individual representatives of these professions, which is transferred to integrated opinions on distinguished professional groups. On a social scale, therefore, we generally have clear opinions (both positive and negative) about the activities of the prosecutors, judges and lawyers, doctors of various specialties, financiers, bankers, as well as teachers of different levels in education.

Despite the weaker relations than in the case of intragroup transfer, the intergroup transfer of educational capital – i.e.: group–group and group(s)–society – is extremely important.

It is based on the transfer of knowledge, skills and social competences between members of various groups (Sztompka, 2012, pp. 194-195; Sztompka 2016, pp. 319-320). We would certainly like the educational capital of lawyers and doctors to be transferred to other professional groups and, preferably, to society as a whole. Similarly, in times of economic crisis – inflation and decreasing pace of investment development – we are referring to the need to transfer the educational capital of economists. On the other hand, in the era of rapid social changes and re-evaluations in terms of the young generation's value system, we expect an effective transfer of educational capital, especially of an educational nature, on the line: teachers – parents.

Conclusion

The elements of the concept of the transfer of educational capital, outlined only in a synthetic way, can be supplemented and developed. However, it is important to understand the mechanisms of this transfer, along with the accompanying unambiguous message regarding its importance for the quality of professional and social life. Awareness of the fact that the level of social competence of individuals, and thus of entire societies, can be raised practically without financial outlays, should inspire multidimensional

activities promoting sharing knowledge, skills and social competences. Organizational undertakings, enabling the natural transfer of these components in the interpersonal space are necessary for the implementation of this idea (Sztompka, 2016, pp. 91-98; Lubrańska, 2017, p. 139).

In the field of education and professional work, it seems advisable to reflect on the individual level of educational capital. Each pupil/student and employee could, from time to time, work out a balance sheet of their own qualifications/competences (qualifications are competences confirmed by institutions authorized to do so). In this way, the individual level of knowledge, skills and social competences can be related to the findings contained in the core curriculum (pupils), syllabus (students) and professional qualification standards (employees and jobseekers).

The substantive and methodical preparation of teachers of all levels and employers who create conditions for their employees to raise qualifications remains an open educational problem. It is they who decide about the success of the presented idea. In the case of teachers, research indicates a shortage of social competences, which – even with the appropriate level of knowledge and skills – is a very unfavorable phenomenon (Kwiatkowski, S. T., 2018, pp. 628-632; see: Piorunek, 2020). It can be assumed that the situation is similar for employers. This is worrying due to the fact that the effectiveness of the exchange of knowledge and skills depends on the level of social competences of the people involved.

Another problem, this time of a psychological nature, is the determination of the relationship between personality traits such as neuroticism, extraversion, openness to experience, agreeableness and conscientiousness (see: Oleś and Drat-Ruszczak, 2018, pp. 750-753; Strelau and Zawadzki, 2018, pp. 804-807; Zimbardo, Johnson and McCann, 2010, pp. 39-40), and the tendency of the individual to unconditionally accept the sharing of individual capital (see: Kwiatkowski, S. T., 2019, pp. 178-182). It should also be noted that the tendency in question depends on the self-esteem of the individual. With low self-esteem, the prevailing belief is that we have nothing to offer others. On the other hand, with an inflated self-esteem, we do not expect someone to convey something interesting to us - we are not focused on receiving, we rather see ourselves as the sender.

The problems highlighted in this article as an example, require in-depth theoretical analyses as well as further empirical research.

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