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## Differences in Perceptions of the Quality of Education and Employment Effectiveness of Schools in a Non-Skills-Focused Education System

### Abstract

*Objectives:* This paper is an attempt to identify differences between schools within the same education system in terms of how to improve students' chances of success in the labour market. The main objective is to identify differences between schools and between students' attitudes and views. In doing so, the authors take the first step in analysing the quality of education in a non-skills-focused education system.

*Research Design & Methods:* The research was conducted in 2022 in 3 different schools in the Małopolska region. Pupils in the final classes of primary schools were surveyed. The questionnaire was completed by all students in the class (sample size: 156). The results of a survey conducted in 3 types of schools – urban public school, urban private school, and rural school – are presented.

*Findings:* The results of the research show that there are clear differences in opinions about the quality of the education system in schools, and differences in statements about training for future development, actual involvement in training, or perceptions of entrepreneurship or attitudes towards money. The school for which these factors develop differently than for the other schools is the private school. Pupils there rate the quality of education and its employability much higher than in public schools. Pupils in private schools are much less likely to seek opportunities to acquire skills outside the education system. The analyses show that the differences between a rural public school and an urban private school are greater than those between an urban public school and a rural public school.

*Implications/Recommendations:* The article diagnoses and shows that despite operating within an education system, one school is able to operate more efficiently and in a more employment-friendly way than others. The article suggests that a key aspect of finding solutions to the poor evaluation of the quality of education in the case of public schools is to answer the question of what characteristics of a private school influence its better perception by students. For example, it could be that private schools are more likely to encourage students to think about their future careers, that teachers provide more career-related content as part of the educational process, or that the school is generally rated significantly better than others in preparing students for working life.

*Contribution/Value Added:* The article provides evidence that different organisations can influence the quality of the educational process, particularly in the context of students' transition to the labour market and future employment.

*Keywords:* private and public school; rural and urban school, labour market transition, employment, entrepreneurship, entrepreneurial attitudes, non-skills-focused education system; education system; education policy

*Article classification:* research article

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## Introduction

The quality of the education system undeniably plays a crucial role in shaping students' attitudes, aspirations, and skills, influencing their future personal and professional development. Education policies currently being shaped emphasise the need to analyse and understand how differences in the quality of the education system in different types of schools affect students, shaping their attitudes to learning or career aspirations (Cochran-Smith, 2003; Hill et al., 2003; Rowe, 2012). Therefore, an essential aspect of our research was to show that the schools we studied differed in what the surveyed students emphasised, among other things, in developing skills needed for the future labour market. It is important to note that we did not focus on specific subjects and courses, but, rather, on the atmosphere, the teachers' attitudes, and the students' opinions about the school and the educational path it followed.

In this article, we present the results of a study whose aim was to analyse and interpret various factors objectively, considering both positive aspects and potential limitations that may affect the accuracy and reliability of our conclusions. The study, the results of which we present, focused on students in three different schools: an urban public school, an urban private school, and a rural public school. The analysis of the data was aimed at identifying ascending differences between students from different schools.

It is worth noting that the approach to the research topic was multifaceted, taking into account the variety of issues affecting the students' educational experience.

The first analysed aspect was students' willingness and self-identification to seek extracurricular activities. A series of questions were designed to understand whether students in urban public schools, urban private schools, and rural schools differed in their initiative to seek extracurricular opportunities. Learning how the design of the education system affects students' motivation to participate in extracurricular activities is essential in the context of today's labour market, where additional skills and interests are becoming increasingly important (Acar & Gündüz, 2017; Denault & Guay, 2017). Going beyond the traditional learning framework can foster the development of students' skills and passions, contributing to success in future careers. On the other hand, the shortcomings and inadequacies of the functioning education system may force students to seek skills and qualifications outside formal education (Mugabi et al., 2021).

Another aspect of the analysis was students' attitudes towards money. The study aimed to understand whether the place of residence or education and the type of teaching influence students' perceptions and attitudes towards money as an essential factor influencing career decisions (Zhan, 2015). The critical question was – are there differences between the students of the schools included in the study in their assessment of the value of money and its role in their lives? Young people's perceptions about money are crucial in shaping their consumer attitudes, their ability to manage their finances, and their preparation for the challenges of adult life. Understanding these differences can provide valuable insights for, among other things, financial education and supporting students in managing their own resources.

The issue of self-identification in shaping students' career aspirations was also an important question we explored. Can the quality of the education system influence their career aspirations? Do students from different types of schools have different career goals and visions for the future? In the context of the dynamically-changing labour market, choosing the right career path is crucial for success in life (McWhirter et al., 2000). Choosing the right course of study can influence acquiring the skills and competencies needed for future work. Analysing students' career aspirations

from different types of schools can provide vital information for adapting curricula and supporting their careers. How education influences students' career development in terms of specific skills and awareness of labour market challenges remains a fundamental question.

In the next section, we present the detailed results of our survey and take a critical approach to their interpretation. We point to the strengths of the study as well as its limitations. Our survey is, on the one hand, a first step towards analysing the different types of education within a homogeneous – not skills-focused – education system and, on the other hand, an attempt to answer the question of how, in a given education system, the pathways for the development of professional skills needed for future transition to the labour market are shaped.

The main aim of our study is to provide valuable insights for policymakers developing the education system and to stimulate further research into the quality of the education system and the impact of system structure on students' career paths. Understanding this complex issue is essential for developing education systems, adapting curricula, and supporting students in their succeeding in both school and work.

## Literature review

A vital aspect of the analysis is the differences between schools, which is due to the school's location (rural-urban) and the ownership and management (private-public). However, the most crucial element for later advantage in the labour market is professional qualifications and employable skills.

Modern societies face the challenge of adapting education systems to the ever-changing labour market. In today's economy, professional qualifications are key to career success (Coffield, 2004; Payne, 2008; Payne & Keep, 2011). Research shows how crucial professional qualifications are in terms of both entering the labour market and pursuing a designated career path (Jackson, 2014, 2016). In the rapidly changing labour market, having the right qualifications, as well as the ability to adapt them to changing job requirements, is a key requirement for employment (Cunningham & Villaseñor, 2016; Mayhew, 1999; Payne & Keep, 2011; Wolf, 2004).

Increasingly, governments appear to be handing over responsibility for providing skills from the education system to the market and businesses within it (Cunningham & Villaseñor, 2016). The state often forgoes the opportunity to shape the education system and specific educational pathways in such a way as to shape students' skills and qualifications in line with the demands of the future (Parkes, 2012). By failing to change the education system, the market sets standards in the area of expected qualifications, responding to current shortages (Busso et al., 2017; Pujol-Jover et al., 2015). In this way, the state allows for the inertial creation of skills and professional qualifications that are the product of current market needs, and is thus not directed towards future changes and needs of the labour market and the economy (Dalitz & Toner, 2015; Parkes, 2012).

By not changing the education system, the state is moving away from the possibility of strategically shaping qualifications for the labour market. In doing so, the state faces the challenge of future management of the structural problems resulting from the mismatch between qualifications and skills and market needs (Pujol-Jover et al., 2015). Nevertheless, the formal education system still plays a crucial role in laying the right foundations to enable students to adapt successfully to the labour market (Lloyd & Payne, 2003). In recent years, we have seen a slow change in governments' approach to the role of education in providing relevant qualifications. The concept

of new education is most often integrated into the overall social and economic environment (Radermacher & Walia, 2013)

Research shows unequivocally that the lack of appropriate vocational skills is a significant barrier for graduates, making it difficult for them to transition smoothly into the labour market and remain in it (Radermacher et al., 2014). Efforts are being made to introduce, among other things, soft skills into the education system, with no single and consistently implemented pathway for planned change (Graham et al., 2019). The problem is often rooted in insufficient funding, insufficient teacher training, and the lack of resources. Suggestions for solutions include increasing funding, improving teacher training, and making resources more accessible.

In an era of dynamic economic and labour market changes, adaptation to new technologies and the capacity for lifelong learning become crucial. In this context, education should target the creation of skills and competencies as well as the ability to develop or change them during working life (Busso et al., 2017). Understanding the changing demands of the market is crucial to practical skills development in students. Changing the education system and orienting it towards skills and competency development will increase the match between labour supply and future challenges.

## **Urban and rural schools**

When comparing students' skills and opinions about school made by students in rural and urban schools, there are significant differences between the two (Mbagaya, 2021). Research shows that residents and students in smaller population centres and rural areas show lower skills than their urban counterparts, and this proportion increases with distance from more robust urban centres (Alasia & Magnusson, 2005). Researchers question where this disparity might come from. The determinants of such variation come from different areas; for this article, we would like to show only those relating directly to education.

As a first step, it is worth noting that the educational expectations of students from urban areas are higher than those of rural and migrant students (Li & Hou, 2022). The key influencing factor is family environment, cognitive ability, and the environment. However, these differences are not limited to educational skills and expectations. Studies of executive functions and abilities, as well as cognitive abilities, have shown that they are different between rural and urban areas (Mbagaya, 2021). For example, what is particularly relevant in today's economy are the apparent differences in integrating new technologies or in students' preferences for using technology for learning (Wang, 2013). However, to better understand the differences between social groups with different social and territorial statuses, further investigation of their experiences is needed.

Although parents' expectations of their children's education are similar in both rural and urban areas, graduation rates, for example, tend to be lower in rural areas (Li & Hou, 2022). Moreover, rural youth have lower aspirations for university completion than their urban peers, even if the level of socioeconomic status is similar (Echazarra & Radinger, 2019; Tieken, 2016). It is noteworthy that despite school and parental support for continuing education, some rural families still resist the idea, even though a specific educational pathway increases the possibility of success in the labour market (Li & Hou, 2022).

Nevertheless, the difficulties in providing adequate rural education, such as the lack of infrastructure or quality teachers, do not affect all areas equally intensely (Looker & Bollman, 2020). Therefore, the facts about rural areas themselves cannot be ignored. Their differences are

significant, especially for those far from urban centres (Alasia & Magnusson, 2005; Echazarra & Radinger, 2019). In these regions, greater teacher mobility is observed (Li & Hou, 2022; Looker & Bollman, 2020). The management of educational institutions, the atmosphere, the support of students, and the values conveyed significantly impact students' continuation of their education at subsequent levels. From this perspective, rural out-migration is a factor in the poorer educational outcomes of rural youth (Griffin et al., 2011). Notably, part of the difference in secondary school dropout rates between rural and urban areas is due to unequal distribution and the complex situation of those identifying themselves locally or culturally.

Given today's educational trends, an important aspect is the growing emphasis on pursuing the STEM pathway in the education process (education in the fields of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics). STEM translates into higher employability (Grimes et al., 2019). However, local circumstances often make it difficult for teachers or guidance counsellors to guide students towards STEM-related careers. Place-based changes are needed to raise awareness among rural students and their families about STEM-related career opportunities.

In the labour market context, employability is becoming an increasingly important factor affecting the career prospects of school leavers, especially in countries with market-based employment mechanisms (Cunningham & Villaseñor, 2016). Analyses and studies show that closing the gap between rural and urban graduates is needed to build a sustainable school system and equalise employability (Lai et al., 2011). Investment in early childhood development and education is necessary. This support should come from local and governmental authorities, helping close the school readiness gap (Gan et al., 2016).

## **Private and public schools**

An analysis of the available research indicates essential differences between public and private educational institutions. These differences are often presented through educational outcomes and student development (Crespo-Cebada et al., 2014; Mancebón & Muñiz, 2008). Considering educational outcomes, research shows that students in private schools often score better on educational achievement tests (Marilou et al., 2020). In many cases, higher levels of knowledge and skills can be observed in private school students (Crespo-Cebada et al., 2014). Opinions about private schools are primarily positive, as they are associated with better education, a conducive environment, a variety of extracurricular activities, and convenience for working parents (Doğan, 2020; Khan, Chandio, & Farooqi, 2014).

Public schools are rated higher on both objective indicators and subjective opinions (Crespo-Cebada et al., 2014). Educational efficiency often varies according to the type of school, but also according to other factors, e.g. location; research shows that the impact of location can be even greater than the method of funding (Yi-Gean Chen, 2017). However, research also reveals that private schools, even those that partly depend on government support, also show higher efficiency than public schools, although regional inequalities affect their efficiency scores (Mancebón & Muñiz, 2008). In this context, private schools are an important alternative to public schools, because they can provide high-quality learning and thus can provide a reference for the public education system (Marilou et al., 2020). In terms of future employment, private schools have similar employment efficiency to public schools, but private schools outperform comparable public schools in terms of further career pathway efficiency, as indicated by studies in the OECD countries (Dronkers & Robert, 2008).

However, it is noted that a significant proportion of the achievement gap between private and public school students can be attributed to variation in average student characteristics (78%), of which 45% is due to family background and 26% to school quality (Dronkers & Robert, 2008). Those numbers suggest that external factors play a significant role in shaping educational outcomes, and this research demonstrates the significant impact of parental involvement in shaping students' career paths (Xiao et al., 2016).

An important factor influencing the quality of learning is teacher satisfaction. In this context, it can be seen that private schools often stand out with better results (Henderson et al., 2020). It seems that teachers working in private schools show more satisfaction and a positive attitude towards their work. Positive aspects include a positive working atmosphere, greater pedagogical autonomy, and more opportunity to implement innovative teaching methods (Crespo-Cebada et al., 2014; Henderson et al., 2020; Khan, Chandio, & Farooqi, 2014).

It is also important to emphasise that each type of school has its characteristics, advantages, and limitations (Peterson & Llaudet, 2006). Public schools play an essential role in providing access to education for all students, regardless of their background or financial situation (Crespo-Cebada et al., 2014; Goyal, 2009). Private schools, on the other hand, often emphasise individualised learning, specialisation, and the provision of additional learning activities. However, the cost of education in private schools could be a barrier for many families, leading to inequalities in access to better-quality education (Goyal, 2009). In addition, some studies suggest that once socioeconomic factors are considered, the achievement gap between private and public school students may narrow (Doğan, 2020).

## Methodology

The research focused on social and economic (including entrepreneurial) attitudes and behaviour among final-year primary school students. The research questions referred to future employment and the propensity to choose a specific career path. In this article, we present the research results and the analysis developed concerning students' attitudes and their evaluation of the school and the education system in the context of future employment and careers.

The research in question was conducted in 2022 in three primary schools. The schools selected for the study participated in the non-formal education development project implemented by the Cracow University of Economics. The selected schools differed from each other by a combination of two characteristics, i.e. place of location (urban-rural) and form of ownership (private-public); The schools in the study group were:

1. Public School from an urban municipality,
2. Public School from a rural municipality,
3. Private School from an urban municipality.

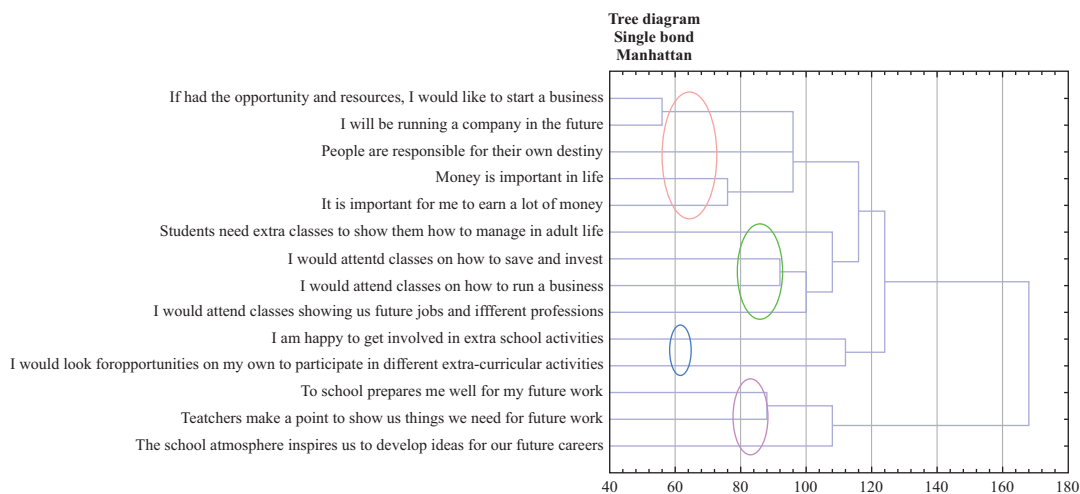
The research was conducted as an anonymised questionnaire delivered to the students in their last classes. All project participants completed the questionnaire. The analysed alternatives were developed based on questions based on a 5-point Likert scale.

The surveys focused on students' needs and expectations as expressed in relation to questions about the school, but also about their professional vision for the future. The study examined viewpoints concerning the educational establishment, the educators' role, the nature of teaching, the quality of education, and how it matched pupils' expectations. The investigation analysed the matter of promoting the advancement of students, the atmosphere, or the extra-curricular activities.

In the analysis presented here, in the first step, a cluster analysis was performed to find similarities between variables representing similar opinions and attitudes of the students. The second step was to find differences when clustering variables for different types of schools. An analysis of variance – a statistical method for examining observations that depend on one or more factors acting simultaneously – was used for comparison. This method explains the probability with which the extracted factors can account for differences between observed group averages (Blalock, 1979; Luszczewicz & Słaby, 2008).

## Results and discussion

In the first step, the cluster analysis allowed four variables to be distinguished (Figure 1). The first group included variables relating to views of the future and related social views and attitudes towards money. Here, we can see similar variability for the view that “I will/would like to run a business in the future” with the view that “money is important in life” and the belief that “people are themselves responsible for their destiny”. These categories of variables that are a set of attitudes and beliefs can be called ‘Entrepreneurship allows you to earn a lot’. The second group comprises variables that combine responses concerning “the declared desire to participate in training and lessons related to future careers” and the belief that “students need such lessons”. This group of variables can be called the “Declaration of improving skills for future development”. The third group consists of two variables presenting “actual involvement in the classes” and “the desire to acquire knowledge”. This group of variables can be called ‘Actual commitment to competence enhancement’. The last group comprises the answers to questions about the quality of education; it includes the responses to questions about the atmosphere in the school, whether the school inspires development and creativity, whether the teachers pay attention to things needed for later careers, and whether, in general, the school prepares well for future work. We can call this category of variables ‘the quality of the education system’.



**Figure 1.** Cluster analysis of the studied variables

Source: Based on our own research.

As can be seen in the figure, the last group of variables, “the quality of the education system”, stands out from the other clusters depicting the students’ attitudes and views. It may indicate a different perception of school, from the need to be an entrepreneur or earn money to the desire to participate in classes to develop professional skills. The significant remoteness of the clusters from each other suggests that the education system is subject to a very different evaluation and does not fit into developmental or entrepreneurial categories or those related to career futures in general. The evaluation and perception of these variables is different from the others. For this reason, we decided to investigate these particular variables specifically when carrying out the analyses.

The first analytical step was to find a grouping variable that would show precise equations between the different variable categories in the study group. After testing several variables, it turned out that the variable confirming the existence of differences between categories was the school-type variable. This variable shows the differences between public and private schools and urban and rural schools. We decided to carry out a broader analysis, which we began by looking for differences between students’ opinions and attitudes that vary by place of residence and by type of school.

The variance analysis allows us to show statistically significant differences between different types of schools and places of education. The first significant difference observed during the conducted analysis is the self-seeking of extracurricular activities; this difference is visible and also statistically significant between the urban private school and the urban public school; in this case, more students of the private school declared to seek the possibility to participate in extracurricular activities.

Taking into account the students’ views on money, we can observe that significant differences are found in the comparison between the urban private school and the rural public school; in the case of the rural school, students firmly stated that money is essential in life and that money is used for spending. In the case of the latter opinion, pupils from the rural school differed when compared to pupils from the urban public school. In both cases, i.e. in the comparison of the rural school to the two urban schools, the difference in means was clear (1.333 compared to the urban private school and 1.167 compared to the urban public school), which indicated that there were different attitudes towards money and its functions between the students from the rural school and the two urban schools.

Further analysis indicates that surveyed students from rural schools are significantly more likely to run their businesses in the future than students from the two urban schools. The analysis of variance showed no statistically significant differences between the rural public school and the urban public school for the following two questions. In contrast, differences between the private school and public schools were found to be significant. In the case of this category of variables, defined above as ‘Declaration of improving skills for future development’, it can be seen that public school students are less interested in additional activities, whether in money management or related to the challenges of adult life. These differences are not huge, but they are visible and consistent, as they apply to every variable in this category.

What is most relevant from the perspective of our research is the evaluation of the education system’s performance by assessing the performance of schools as such. As can be seen in Table 2, it lists the full results of the analysis of variance conducted for the three variables that, as a result of the cluster analysis conducted earlier, we classified as the category “the quality of the education system”. Multiple comparisons were carried out for each category of clustering variable, i.e. for each type of school. What becomes a key conclusion after analysing the data from the table is



**Table 1.** Multiple comparisons for the dependent variables for the grouping variable “Type of school”

Dependent variable		Multiple comparisons					
		Difference of means	Stand. error.	Significance	95% confidence interval		
					Lower limit	Upper limit	
I am looking for opportunities to participate in extracurricular activities myself.	public urban	private urban	.767*	0.216	0.002	0.24	1.29
Money is important in life.	private urban	public rural	-.467*	0.153	0.008	-0.84	-0.1
Money is essential in life.	private urban	public rural	-1.333*	0.15	0.001	-1.7	-0.97
	public rural	public urban	1.167*	0.158	0.001	0.78	1.55
The profession of the future – running your own business.	private urban	public rural	-.667*	0.176	0.001	-1.09	-0.24
	public rural	public urban	.500*	0.186	0.024	0.05	0.95
Students need extra classes to show them how to manage adult life.	private urban	public rural	-.600*	0.225	0.026	-1.15	-0.05
	public urban	private urban	.583*	0.228	0.035	0.03	1.14
I would attend classes on how to save and how to invest.	private urban	public rural	-.567*	0.217	0.030	-1.09	-0.04
	public urban	private urban	.733*	0.217	0.003	0.21	1.26

\* The difference in means is significant at the 0.05 level.

Source: Based on our own research.

a comparison of the evaluations of the education system by analysing the way teachers work in the context of imparting content related to future employment, the atmosphere at school, whether the school inspires students from a future career perspective, and the overall evaluation of the school from the perspective of its ability to prepare students for future employment.

The analysis of all cases clearly shows that, for the schools surveyed, pupils rated the private school more positively regarding the described aspects of school performance. In the case of the evaluation of the teachers’ work in terms of preparation for future work, it can be seen that the pupils of the private school rate their teachers better than the pupils of the municipal public school. A conditional evaluation can also be made of the comparison between urban and rural public schools (although, in this case, the statistical significance value was slightly exceeded). The comparison between the public schools, in this case, shows that pupils from the rural school rate the teachers higher in terms of the content related to future employment presented during lessons.

Another aspect is the atmosphere in the school, which can inspire thinking about the future and the search for development paths directed towards future work. Here again, the values obtained by the private school are a clear outlier. Compared with the urban public school,

**Table 2.** Multiple comparisons for dependent variables from the “Quality of the education system” category

Dependent variable		Multiple comparisons					
		Difference of means	Stand. error.	Significance	95% confidence interval		
					Lower limit	Upper limit	
Teachers pay attention to show us things we need for our future careers.	private urban	public rural	0.5	0.226	0.089	-0.06	1.06
		public urban	<b>1.083*</b>	0.226	<b>0.000</b>	0.53	1.64
	public rural	private urban	-0.5	0.226	0.089	-1.06	0.06
		public urban	0.583	0.238	0.052	0	1.17
	public urban	private urban	<b>-1.083*</b>	0.226	<b>0.000</b>	-1.64	-0.53
		public rural	-0.583	0.238	0.052	-1.17	0
The atmosphere at school inspires us to develop ideas for our future careers.	private urban	public rural	<b>.767*</b>	0.251	<b>0.011</b>	0.15	1.39
		public urban	<b>1.017*</b>	0.251	<b>0.000</b>	0.4	1.64
	public rural	private urban	<b>-.767*</b>	0.251	<b>0.011</b>	-1.39	-0.15
		public urban	0.25	0.264	0.640	-0.4	0.9
	public urban	private urban	<b>-1.017*</b>	0.251	<b>0.000</b>	-1.64	-0.4
		public rural	-0.25	0.264	0.640	-0.9	0.4
The school prepares me well for my future job.	private urban	public rural	<b>.733*</b>	0.219	<b>0.004</b>	0.19	1.27
		public urban	<b>.733*</b>	0.219	<b>0.004</b>	0.19	1.27
	public rural	private urban	<b>-.733*</b>	0.219	<b>0.004</b>	-1.27	-0.19
		public urban	0	0.231	1.000	-0.57	0.57
	public urban	private urban	<b>-.733*</b>	0.219	<b>0.004</b>	-1.27	-0.19
		public rural	0	0.231	1.000	-0.57	0.57

\* The difference in means is significant at the 0.05 level.

Source: Based on our own research.

the average difference is significant (1.017) in favour of the private school, where, according to the students' assessment, the atmosphere inspires them to develop ideas for their professional future. Compared with the rural school, the advantage in evaluation is also on the side of the urban private school (0.767). However, this difference is less significant than in the comparison with the urban public school.

The final aspect of the analysis is the overall evaluation of the school as an institution preparing for future professional life. In this case, the student survey results show a clear advantage for the private school. The difference in mean evaluation values when comparing the private school with the two public schools are the same and amounted to  $-0.733$ .

The research presents interesting differences in attitudes to learning, the perception of money, involvement in development, or the evaluation of schools and teachers. The results obtained allow for interpretations as well as creating opportunities for further research questions.

As can be seen, a significant difference is the students' attitude towards extra activities and seeking them out on their own. Students in the surveyed urban public schools show more initiative and willingness to seek out opportunities to participate in extracurricular activities independently. This may suggest that students in these schools are more motivated to pursue their interests outside the standard curriculum. It also shows that students are not receiving appropriate content within their school education. This may reflect the broader educational offerings available to students at the private school, e.g. interest circles or extracurricular activities. This raises the interesting question of whether broadening the offer of public schools would improve the situation for students forced to seek relevant content outside the education system. The literature and research often highlights this very differentiating aspect between private and public schools (Crespo-Cebada et al., 2014; Doğan, 2020; Goyal, 2009; Khan, Chandio, & Farooqi, 2014; Mancebón & Muñiz, 2008; Marilou et al., 2020).

The difference in the perception of money occurring between urban and rural school students is interesting. Students from the rural school placed a significantly higher value on money. The research shows that money was essential to a successful life for the rural school studied. In contrast, the urban school students presented a more balanced attitude towards money. This difference may be due to the different living conditions and economic realities faced by the students of these schools, as well as it may relate to the perception of social advancement and success in life mainly through the financial prism (Diener et al., 2010; Shim et al., 2009). Cities offer many pathways to social advancement that are not always linked to financial success, so perceptions of success in cities may only sometimes be associated with financial success (Ameliawati & Setiyani, 2018; Baron & Markman, 2003; Martos & Kopp, 2012).

Another interesting element was the significantly higher interest of rural public school students in running their businesses in the future than students from the surveyed urban schools. This may primarily indicate the rural school students' more remarkable resourcefulness and self-confidence, from which they are more courageous in taking responsibility for their destinies. On the other hand, it may also be related to the declared attitude towards money. From this perspective, the desire to run a business may be linked to higher earnings. In both cases, a higher level of entrepreneurial intentions is evident among the students of the rural public school. Entrepreneurship and professional self-efficacy are firmly rooted in rural areas (Egedy et al., 2015; Vaillant & Lafuente, 2007). Besides, research shows that rural education systems tend to be oriented towards self-reliance. Hence, we can infer a possible higher resourcefulness of students from a rural school (Joussemet et al., 2008; Samuels & Pryce, 2008). On the other

hand, this may be the result of seeking opportunities for social advancement, seen on a par with financial advancement as synonymous with success in life (Ameliawati & Setiyani, 2018; Baron & Markman, 2003), since entrepreneurship and running a business is seen as the best opportunity for financial advancement (Hitt et al., 2001; Kennedy et al., 2003)

From the perspective of the objectives of this article, the critical aspect was the category 'the quality of education'. Here, the analysis of all variables indicates that students rate the private school significantly more positively compared to the rating given to public schools. Firstly, private school students rate their teachers better from the perspective of their work, which is directed at preparing them for future work. As research shows, this may be the result of better working conditions for teachers, more flexibility in the curriculum, or a more individualised approach to students, which promotes better preparation for future professional challenges (Clayson, 2009; Klem & Connell, 2004; Kools et al., 2020). Secondly, the school atmosphere can significantly inspire students to think about the future and explore pathways related to future work (Blanco & Rodríguez-Martínez, 2015; Singh, 2014; Xu et al., 2022). As the research shows, private school students rated the school atmosphere as more inspiring and conducive to the development of ideas for their future careers compared to students in the two public schools surveyed. Thirdly, students of the private school rate the school itself and its focus on the development of work-related competencies better. Moreover, as research shows, better perceptions of the school are associated with greater engagement in work and learning (Clayson, 2009; Klem & Connell, 2004; Kools et al., 2020; Purkey & Smith, 1983).

These results suggest that private school education quality may translate into better teacher evaluations and a more motivating school atmosphere, which fosters students' development and shapes their positive attitude towards future work. From this perspective, it can be concluded that the quality of education in a given school impacts differences in students' perceptions of teachers and the atmosphere. Schools, even within a given education system, can create a more motivating environment for students, which translates into better teacher ratings, schools, and an atmosphere that inspires development.

## Conclusions

The research findings that have transpired point to the need to pay attention to the quality of education in different types of schools and to take action to increase the diversity of educational provision and to support teachers in developing the skills to motivate and inspire students to succeed in the future (Dronkers & Robert, 2008; Khan, Chandio, & Farooqi, 2014; Looker & Bollman, 2020).

On the one hand, schools, but above all, education policymakers, should increase the capacity of schools to expand their educational offerings. Furthermore, in the next step, they should inspire and encourage students to actively seek and participate in extracurricular activities, which can better develop their interests and passions. Schools should pay attention to their students' career aspirations, support them in their professional development, and identify pathways for such development (Coffield, 2004; Payne, 2008; Payne & Keep, 2011).

Findings from the research suggest a need to focus on the differences in educational provision and access to various development opportunities in different types of schools. Measures are worth taking to increase educational provision and ensure that students from different backgrounds have

equal opportunities to develop their interests, financial skills, and career aspirations (Doğan, 2020; Goyal, 2009).

Although not directly emerging from the research, an important finding is that entrepreneurial education needs to be raised in profile. Schools should support students to acquire skills and competencies, develop career aspirations, and provide appropriate opportunities for development (Busso et al., 2017; Radermacher et al., 2014). Introducing skills into schools can positively impact the development of students' competencies and prepare them for the challenges of adult life.

In conclusion, the study shows that the quality of education plays an important role in shaping students' behaviour and attitudes. At the same time, it shows differences between school students that may be due to the quality of the educational offer and access to a variety of development opportunities. It is worth taking action to increase the diversity of educational offerings, promote financial education and entrepreneurship, and ensure that students have equal opportunities to succeed in the future.

A key aspect remains the design of the education system, which is underfunded, overburdened, inflexible, and focused on knowledge rather than skills. However, a comparison of different types of schools shows that even within an inefficient system, it is possible to achieve different outcomes and, consequently, different student grades. It is also worth considering further research to understand better the reasons for these differences between students from urban private schools, urban public schools, and rural schools. Such research can help to tailor curricula and educational support better to meet best the needs and aspirations of students in different school settings.

The conducted research provides a clear analytical pathway towards enhancing the efficacy of academic pursuits to strengthen and better exploit the development opportunities of students. A primary focus of the research is identifying factors that augment the efficiency of the transition from academia to the job market. Transition efficiency is not only about quantitative measures, but also about qualitative ones. It aims to closely match students' skills and qualifications to their future work, resulting in a more efficient use of labour resources. It aims to closely match students' skills and qualifications to their future work, resulting in a more efficient use of labour resources. This becomes especially vital given the unfavourable demographic shifts in developed nations. Identifying inadequacies in the education system and investigating effective approaches enables us to diagnose low educational efficiency. Additionally, we can showcase model interventions that can be implemented even in a well-functioning system. This was the intended purpose of presenting variances across different school types. The analyses conducted in the following steps enable us to examine the scope for changes in educational policies, both at the micro level – i.e. pertaining to the functioning of schools and teachers – and at the macro level, i.e. with regard to the orientation of the education system towards fostering the skills and qualifications essential for achieving success in the job market.

## **Limitations**

The paper acknowledges limitations that should be noted. First, the sample size was measured in two dimensions: 1) the number of pupils; 2) the number of schools. In order to be consistent in the analysis, we surveyed whole classes, which does not allow for the appropriate proportions known even from the sex ratios in the years in question. However, we decided that the sample would be complete in this case and include all the pupils of the classes in question. On the other hand, the lack of a more significant number of schools in the survey results from an attempt to

find differences due to the specifics of the schools rather than seeking the representativeness of the survey. Therefore, in this article, we do not generalise the results, but refer to them as if they were the results of a qualitative study conducted on a particular group of respondents.

In order to eliminate the possible influence of respondent bias, we conducted the survey anonymised, and no teacher or school representative was present during the survey. We also communicated to the students that the information obtained would be the subject of a scientific study, the results of which would not affect either the surveyed students or the school.

We considered the selectivity of private school students and the benefits associated with studying in such schools. For this reason, we have separated questions about attitudes to school from questions concerning preparation for future working life. In this respect, we also considered that the results may be influenced by, among other things, the availability of additional activities and better school facilities.

We have taken into account the possible influence of the social, economic, and cultural environment both in the research and in the presentation of the results. We have also considered the aspect of both subject and object accessibility in our interpretations. Therefore, we did not introduce generalised interpretations criticising the education system as such, but, rather, focused on specific elements.

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All data will be available and shared upon request.