



Prosper education and knowledge indispensable

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PM You started your career at the beginning of the 90s. Your interests were connected with macroeconomics and microeconomics. Could you tell us, was it difficult to find your place as a woman in the world of economics?

It was not a problem for me, however, I must admit that my interest in economics and contact with the economic life had begun much earlier. My parents made me acquainted with the complexities of the household budget. They were patiently explaining the principles of budget balance, especially when confronted with my extra requests to buy things. I gradually started to be involved in those issues, which probably influenced my choice of the secondary school. Contrary to the expectations of my teachers, I chose secondary school of economics, instead of general education high school. In this way I could have contact with the enterprise as a trainee already in the secondary school. My interest in economics is also partly thanks to my wonderful math teachers throughout all the school years. I was lucky in that respect since mathematics is not always properly taught at school. My math teachers taught with passion and always combined difficult math problems with everyday life. My primary school teacher taught us how to draw up a household budget but also encouraged us to read the works of the eminent Polish mathematician Steinhaus. And we did it without thinking it was an extravagant task.

It also probably influenced my decision to study mathematics. However, on my way to submit the recruiting documents to the University of Warsaw I happened to meet my friend who was just about to submit her documents to the economics faculty at this University. I decided to walk with her to the faculty and after we talked about the economics faculty in more detail I found out there is a lot of mathematics there, including econometrics. As a result, I changed my original intention and decided to study economics with the specialization in econometrics. And it happened, which I do not regret at all since economics is an absolutely fascinating

discipline, a social science and it says a lot about people. While still studying economics at the university I got access to interesting and relatively well-paid commissions and, which is most important, it gave me an opportunity to broaden my expertise.

PM Are there any barriers to achieving high positions by women in Poland? If yes, what are they?

Surely such barriers exist, although I have not experienced them directly myself, fortunately. However, I work at the Warsaw School of Economics and at universities the issue does not seem to be a problem. Such barriers are nevertheless evident when one looks at the statistics: managerial positions are definitely dominated by men. Part of those barriers are a result of greater competitiveness and determination of men in pursuing their careers, part is a result of the stereotypes employers still have about what role a woman should play in society and their conviction that women are worse, less efficient workers. One of the barriers to the promotion of women to high positions are breaks in the career due to maternity leave and upbringing of children. In the Polish legal system the issue is not sufficiently regulated for women though childbearing and upbringing is the most socially valuable investment – and in Poland (and many other countries) particularly in demand, due to an advance of the ageing process in the society and a low population growth. As it follows from my rich experience as a director, including Head of Chair in the Warsaw School of Economics as well as President of the Polish Economic Society, women are excellent workers, very well organized, often more careful, searching and more efficient than men.

PM What qualities should a woman possess in order to achieve a high position or success in general?

Both proper education and knowledge (expertise) seem to be indispensable. Thus it is so important to learn constantly and never be complacent after one gets a university

degree. The issue of the return of individual expenses on education is known in theory as ‘the function of profits in the U letter shape’. It means that considerable profits are gained from the first years of education (when the basic skills of reading, writing, counting are acquired, without which it would be hard to get any job) as well as from the most advanced levels of education, the ones that make a person ‘sticking out from the crowd’. At present, it is rather difficult to be promoted when a woman has just a secondary education or average education in a given age group. However, in order to achieve high position in the career a woman must be determined to have it. She must also believe that she can manage it. And the stereotypes still widespread in the society, including the upbringing models, do not help to stick to the belief. It also has to be taken into account that not all women aim at making a career. I know women who, in spite of numerous successes, give up their career in order to pursue other interests or passions, or to devote to private and family life. It can give more satisfaction than climbing the career ladder. However, if a woman does get promoted it is mainly due to high qualifications and enormous self-determination. A woman in managerial position is usually very demanding on herself. There is a lot of truth in the saying that “for a woman to reach the same position in the career ladder as men she must work at least twice as much”. If a woman does get promoted (even if she did not fight for it) she usually treats her promotion very seriously and responsibly. As a rule, she is very much engaged in her work. Women are generally required to work a lot but not much is forgiven to them. They are often subject to more criticism by employers than men, also by other workers including other women. To help women in their career – in my opinion – employers as well as co-workers should be more objective, the legal system should also be more family-oriented, not to mention access to kindergarten, crèche, health care, and so on. Support on the part of the family, friends and generally good relations in private life bear great importance, too. However, such support is quite often hard to find in our times of individualized, atomized lifestyles. ::