

Political transformations, resulting from taking over the authority by radical, leftist group (Polish Workers' Party), in limited conditions of national sovereignty by USSR must have also influenced on educational conceptions. Among the first three years (1945–48) it was a transitional period because these new, political forces had to remain secret for their real intents. They were obliged to share authority with the moderate leftist groups (Polish Socialist Party – PPS and Peasants' Party – SL) and completely opposite groups, which were against the transformations (Polish Peasants' Party – PSL – under the leadership of *Stanisław Mikolajczyk*).

The main directions of changes in the Polish schooling was worked out by All-Polish Educational Congress (June 1945). The following principles were suggested: (cost)-free education, common access to schools and equal education. The base of this new system created eight-year elementary and obligatory school, with the same program. This eight-year school was to make the grounds for both general and technical secondary school.

This program was too ambitious in poor and destroyed Poland, after the second war. Finally, after three years, the first reform was introduced according to Instructions presented by minister of education, which concerned organization of school year 1948–49. 7-year elementary school and 4-year general secondary school [liceum] started to exist. The numeration of the classes (forms) was succeeding. After the eleventh-form the students took their final exam. This 7-year elementary school was also a base for the different types of technical education. The majority of them composed 2-year elementary trade schools with very narrow specialization and 4-year technical schools were giving right to take higher education. The number of general secondary schools were distinctly limited. The number of youth in general secondary schools made 20% minority in comparison to other types of secondary schools. This state lasted in 1989 when political system was changed.

Between 1948–51 the fight with illiteracy was carried out. About 1 million people were taught reading and writing. However illiteracy still existed among the oldest people (about 2 millions, then Poland counted 30 millions inhabitants). This action had both the social and propaganda aim.

In the years 1946–56 was the worst political time in Polish post-war education. Stalin's form of Marxism's act was introduced also and there were limitations and unscientific opinions in natural and technical sciences. This system manipulated the opinions and terrorized the teachers and the students. It occurred that some of them were imprisoned. After the turning-point in 1956 Polish schools socially revived. Man can claim that it presented the greatest freedom in proclaiming opinions among the socialistic countries.

In 1957 the Second Educational Congress held. Then the suggestions of the changes in the education were presented. After the four-year preparations, in 1961 the Sejm (Parliament) passed the Act about the Development of Educational System. This Act introduced an 8-year elementary school. It helped to decrease, even partly, programmatic overburden in respective forms. Moreover 15-year children were more full-grown to choose the further education. 8-year school was the base for 4-year general secondary school, 5-year technical secondary school and 2 or 3-year elementary trade schools, which prepared the qualified workers in above 500 (!) occupations. This reform was led in the elementary schools between 1962–67 and between 1967–71 in secondary schools.

The certain decade of 1971 to 80 was defined, in propaganda, as a "decade of dynamic development" the contemporary authority announced the postulate of commonness of secondary education. In order to prepare another reform, Board of Experts was appointed.



This Board, under the leadership of *Jan Szczepanski* (sociologist), was to elaborate the report about the stage of education in PRL.

In 1973 the Board of Experts declared for the common 11-year general schools. They claimed that it was the cheapest and the best socially solution. However the Sejm decided to realize a common secondary education as 10-year secondary school. To study at the university, first of all, students were to attend a two year school. At the same time in the middle of the seventies, small country schools were closed. Instead of them, communal comprehensive schools were established. This fact caused the congestion of schools and the problems connected with children's commuting.

Undertaken works on realization of the 10-year schools were stopped in autumn 1980, because of the political transformations in our country and lack of money. It was only introduced for the school duty from 6 year. The first class was called zero class. The initial education ended in III-class instead of the IV-one.

However in 1980–81 owing to Solidarity, the social and the programmatic group was made and the Ministry of Education introduced many changes in humanistic subject. These changes tried to present history and science about society in a more objective way. Moreover reading list in Polish was partly changed into more national values. These favorable modifications were stopped during the marshal time (1982–84).

In 1987 the Prime Minister appointed the next Board of Experts for National Education Affairs under leadership of *Czesław Kupisiewicz* (pedagogue). The results of their works were published in a main report and 30 detailed ones. However these reports did not have any practical usability. Political transformations after 1989 forced a new outlook on educational matters.

Educational transformations in Poland (1990–1993)

As a result of the elections from 1989 the coalition cabinet emerged. The majority of the members came from Solidarity. The Prime Minister of this new government was *Tadeusz Mazowiecki*. The Minister of National Education (MEN) was *Henryk Samsonowicz* (historian).

Generally, it was clear that both economical transformations – withdrawing from the socialistic economy to the market economy and the social transition from the system of a single party in the power to the pluralism and the democracy – needed radical educational modifications. In autumn 1990 it was decided to begin works on reform, which was to concern the program of the general education. Consciously, first of all content was changed. Formal structure of a school-system was untouched. Here is a short calendar of the most important events.

In January 1991 a programmatic section started to work in frame of General Education Department. *Stanisław Staziński* became a supervisor of this section. 13 March 1991 the Ministry took over a new Conception of Program in General Education (fragments below) and scenario of modification in Program of General Education (in annex). In October 1991 the Sejm accepted a so-called Educational Act, which defined the structure and the different forms of the activity in Polish Education.

In January 1992 it took place the first meeting of the groups, which were working out the “programmatic minimum” (minimum program one). This name – the programmatic minimum – was changed into “programmatic elements”. In February 1992 programmatic

section was converted into a separate department, which was called on Office for School Reform Affairs. Between 1992–1993 this Office was the most active.

In March 1992 the first stage over the projects of the programmatic minimum was finished. After their publication many critical opinions appeared. In July 1992 the Minister of Education signed these dispositions about the acceptance of school-books, didactic devices (aids) and possibilities in using collateral textbooks.

In November 1992 the second meeting of groups taking up working out “the programmatic elements” in general education took place. In 1993 these programmatic elements were developed and started to create various versions of complete programs. Moreover, works over changing structure of technical education were also initiated. Here are the fragments from the program of the general education in Polish schools (1991)

- “In the new Conception of the program the basic aim of education, especially in general education, should support and direct of man’s development as a person who can perform in a chosen system of value and is able to live in various types of community. In general, education is an important evolution of humanity, not only the man’s intellectual competence”.
- “In order to really improve a level of teaching, it is necessary to make a correction of the general didactic strategy. Till now, one-sided approach should be substituted by ‘mixed strategy’. It means that the elements of the compelling must be in a specified balance with the elements of stimulating and directing of the development. Reduction of ‘compelling strategy’ is to ensure, that the total students will acquire an essential knowledge whereas the ‘stimulating strategy’ is to enlarge possibilities of the beneficial influence of the schools on individual students’ development.”
- “Potentialities of man’s development are innate and everybody has a certain potential, which in appropriate conditions, can appear as real, evolutionary achievements. However students present different innate potentials and live in various conditions. These facts should be taken under respect when general educational program is constructed.”
- “It means that one should create a general educational program as a construction, which consists of two really different parts. One will keep a conventional form, but instead of an educational ‘maximum’ the minimum of essential knowledge will be demanded from students. On the other hand, the second part of this program will not formulate requirements, but only should indicate desirable types of activities and teaching content, which could be useful in an effective stimulating of students’ development. This part of the program is entirely up to teachers and students abilities and aspirations.”
- “In this new program, the introduction of lesson-system has been moved to the second year of the education. The moment and the method of transition into the lesson-system have been chosen by teachers. It depends on how quickly children have adopted themselves to their school-life.

In the initial phase of education the basic form in estimation of child’s educational progress makes a descriptive mark. The typical school-mark is to appear parallel with the separation of the lesson system and the subjects. Moreover to the end of the third class, the mark should only have a complementary function. The main purpose of these solutions have caused that the first, deep experience connected with the schools should make an impression on children that a school is an institution where man acquires new knowledge and skills, not only good marks.”

- “From four to eight class, one part of the program is realized in a lesson-class system and the second part is worked out in another way. It means that it can be carried among children from one age-group or various, even from different schools. This fact does not destroy a traditional division of students into classes. But the position of form-master increases. He coordinates his students’ activities.”
- “In comparison to the old system, it is very important that in a new one the children will fulfill their school-duty only partly during the lesson-class-system. They will have to take part in a certain amount of activities beyond the lesson-class-system. Obviously, students may overstep the described limit of these activities.”

Further assignments of programmatic conception have concerned organizational and technical affairs approving from the methods of programmatic minimum: programs, handbooks and didactic aids. The creators of this new reformatory conception claim, that for many years Polish model was based on searches and making a diagnosis of situation. A group of experts prepared a project of destined state and its initiation. This new reform makes a different algorithm. The point of reference is not a point of access, in other words, an assumptive model, but the point of issue and included its possibilities of development. The following projects, which had been mentioned above, were realized.

1. The programmatic minimum to nearly all subjects were formulated. Several hundred teachers and scientific workers have involved themselves within their creation and improvement. Several thousands of people have discussed a question.

These programmatic minimum of general education are common for all schools, regardless of their types and the manner of their administration (state, public, private).

On the ground of programmatic minimum, hundreds of teachers’ original programs have appeared. These programs have shown teachers’ creative initiative. The frame-plans of teaching have emerged. The particular subjects have guaranteed minimum of teaching. A certain amount of hours in each class is divided by the headmaster. The amount of lessons can not go beyond a maximum limit of 35 hours in a secondary school. Unfortunately, schools have no money and therefore teaching load is lower.

2. Nowadays, the situation connected with handbooks was regulated. Every willing can write a textbook and every publishing house can print it. The ministry let handbooks and supplementary materials were used in schools after acquaintance with essential, methodical and linguistic reviews written by competent reviewers. As a result, many interesting, collateral handbooks have appeared in our market. Just the same situation is published with exercise books and in lower degree with didactic aids.

3. The students’ activity have increased. Greater percentage of the youth approves an active method of teaching: simulating games, drama, problematical discussions. Moreover subject contests, different types of knowledge competitions are very popular among students. The winner of the subject contests can enter in the university without the exams.

The necessity of foreign language knowledge has rapidly increased lately. The majority of students has chosen English, on second place Russian and German. If parents want their children to teach earlier, it is possible from the first class, fifth or even in Kindergarten. The methods and efficiency of the language teaching have been improved recently.

In elementary schools the problem of students who repeat a class has nearly stopped, to participate those children who have achieved very poor results or suffered from mental deficiency are educated individually or in special classes. Students can also change the

specialization of their education or even the type of school. Obviously they are obliged to take a complementary exams.

4. On account of financial difficulties, in general, the activities beyond the lessons are not worked out. Unfortunately in this field the decided regress takes place.

5. One of the main problems makes a technical education. From the fifties different types of Polish schools were in constant proportion.

- General secondary schools – 4-years (18% of youth);
- Complete technical secondary schools – 5 years (22%);
- Elementary trade schools – 2 years o 3 years (60%) (which were divided into small specialization).

The following structure of Polish schools was clumsy. It did not give the majority of children a chance of getting a proper general education. Moreover this structure impeded the technical mobility and the possibility of studying.

After four years of modifications this proportion looks respectively: 25, 30, 45%. It is intended to educate only 40% of students in elementary trade schools. 40% is the lowest limit because of the children's intellectual abilities and parents' expectations. Owing to different reasons parents and their children often prefer a short and giving possibility of work and educational trade course (lately; gastronomic schools hairdressing.)

Moreover works over a creation of wider specialties in technical schools were completed from 500 specialties and they have only remained 120. On the level of secondary school, the factor of young people who continue education makes about 20% (10% universities and 10% in 2 year colleges [szkola pomaturalna]). This factor is very low. In a few years it should reach about 30%.

It considers to open the whole network of three-year technical (professional) high schools. Nowadays two-grade studies (3-year – licentiate and 5-year – Master's degree) are carried on by few high schools.

6. It has followed a rapid increase in adults' education, both in technical and general schools. Trade schools and courses are very popular among those people who want to change their occupation. Some of them intend to acquire a new profession because they are unemployed.

7. In all Polish elementary and secondary schools religious lessons are performed once or twice a week. It is possible to participate in ethics instead of religion. Ethics lessons are lectured in some of secondary schools of big towns. Conflicts, connected with religion are very rare among teenagers.

The present situation – 1994

As a result of the elections in September 1993, new Polish government consists of the democratic leftists and the peasant's parties (SLD [Sojuszu Lewicy Demokratycznej] and PSL [Polskiego Stronnictwa Ludowego]). Both of them are inheritors of powers, which were active in socialist Poland. This new government promised to transform Polish economy in a calmer and a composed way. It touched the school reform. The Office of Reform was excluded from the MEN structure in the beginning of 1994. Its dignity was reduced and it was included with the Institute of Educational Researches. Nowadays the competencies of Office are not precisely defined.

After 1989 one of the elementary tendency was the creation of civic society, among others through increasing of local governments and informal social groups' rights. Moreover in virtue of the Educational Act from 1991 several hundred private and public schools have been opened. They were organized by public, educational societies and Catholic Church. At the same time, communes took over the administration of 25% of schools. Further changes in this direction were stopped by financial difficulties. Budget funds on schools which were received by councils were calculated below the real costs. As a result of this fact, communal councils do not want to take possession of further schools.

Prepared by a new government the project of Educational Act's modifications (Educational Act from 1991) suggest many amendments which centralize the educational system. It means that the communities should only take care about management and finances of schools. On the other hand, they can not interfere in didactic, educational and protective functions of the schools. This function will entirely depend on the Ministry and its regional departments. The procedure of headmasters and school superintendents' selection will be also modified. The majority of the committee, which will chose these persons, is to have representatives of school administrations. The function of school inspectors will be changed from consultative into decisive. The teachers are to get the status of civil servants, though it is not clear what it means. The parents and the commune councils' influence on teachers' employment will be eliminated. The supervision over schools which do not belong to the state will be increased.

In connection with this project, *Krzysztof Konarzewski* said: "For the lost three years we have created – slowly and with resistance – a self governed school, supported by local environment is a kind of giant stride in an opposite direction. It moves back the Polish Education to the epoch of centralism." Fortunately, it is still a project, we hope that the Sejm will reject this amendment.

The financial situation of schools is a serious menace of school-reform in Poland. The budget funds which were designed for education are insufficient. After a short period (1990–91) of teachers' financial improvement, their standard of life has still decreased. In comparison with other professional groups, teachers, beside health service, belong to the worst paid professional groups. At the same time, teachers' trade union does not want to limit rights, which are contained in the Teacher's Charter. This Charter warrants 18-hours of lessons a week and nearly an entire irremovability of a teacher. The last one can negatively influence on quality of their work.

The future and the effects of schooling reform in Poland are not doomed. This reform has already given a partly positive result. It has released teachers and students' initiative. School was brought closer to the local environment. Some of the headmasters have become a real manager of schools. Unfortunately, there are still a lot of difficulties. Some of them have come from political and union circles. The other ones have resulted from economical, budget causes.

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