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EDUCATION  
IN  
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With this release the Polish Research and Information Service begins a new series of reports on education. Future releases will deal with institutions of higher learning, adult education, educational philosophies and theories and research institutes.

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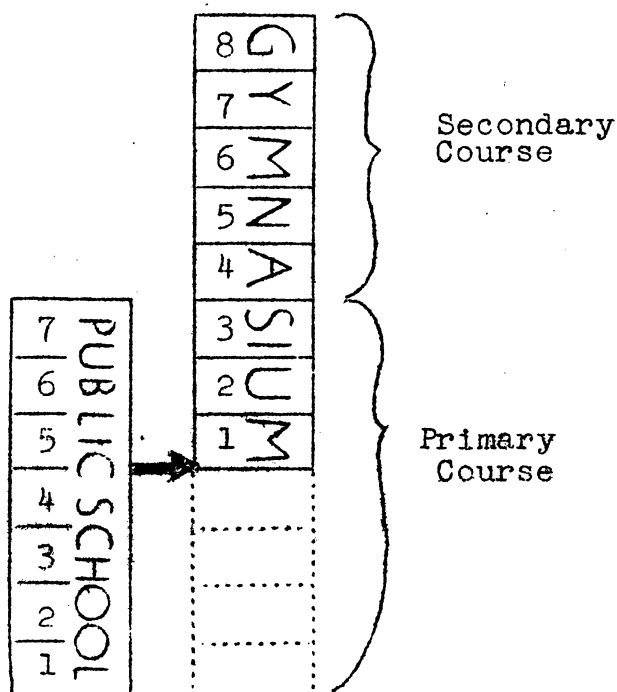
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## EDUCATION BETWEEN THE TWO WORLD WARS

A great educational reform is gaining impetus in Poland today. For the first time secondary education has been made freely available to all; a new school system and new curricula are being instituted in which the traditional Polish objectives of democratic education are now being fully realized.

In order to understand the new educational system it is necessary to examine the history of prewar school systems, because side by side with the new forms which are becoming predominant, old educational forms still exist.

In consequence of the unyielding policy of the partitioning states, Austria, Prussia and Russia, in arresting Polish culture and denationalizing the Poles, educational standards in the annexed lands were very low. Especially ugly was the legacy of extreme illiteracy (57% in 1916) left by the Tzarist rule. Thus, when the day of freedom and independence finally came in 1918, education was in a deplorable condition and three different school systems, inherited from Austria, Germany and Russia, existed in Poland. The difficult task of building from the very foundations a universal and unified school system confronted the Poles. However this problem was met with a vibrant optimism and a determination to utilize to the utmost the newly won freedom which characterized the post-war period in Poland. A strong agitation for making education compulsory and free spread rapidly. This led to the incorporation of the principles of free and compulsory education in the democratic constitution of 1921. It was then that the 7-year public school came into existence. Side by side with the new public system there continued to exist the pre-war gymnasias, which were not tuition free. The gymnasium consisted of a 3-year elementary course followed by a 5-year secondary course, whereas the public school system consisted of a straight 7-year primary course.



Thus, as can be seen from the diagram, the two systems paralleled each other at certain levels. The first four years of a child's school career were spent either in the public school or in a private pre-gymnasium school. At the end of the first 4 years in public school, the student could either enter a

paid gymnasium or continue for the last three years of the public school course. Once this choice was made it was practically impossible for the student to transfer from public school to a gymnasium, for even though the age levels of the last three years of public school and the first three years of gymnasium ran parallel, the curricula and syllaba were entirely different. Thus a student who wished to avail himself of secondary education also had to pass through three years of paid primary schooling. Very few children of peasants and workers were able to procure a secondary education because of the eight years of tuition expense which this entailed. This condition was pointed out by the Department of Education of the U.S. Department of Interior when, in an objective study of the Polish educational system, it described the gymnasium in the following manner:

"Like its progenitor, the German gymnasium, it cared little for the common people, being primarily designed for those who were to take up a professional career. Its course of study was rigid, inflexible and inarticulate and, on the whole, little adapted for the introduction of studies that make for efficiency".\*

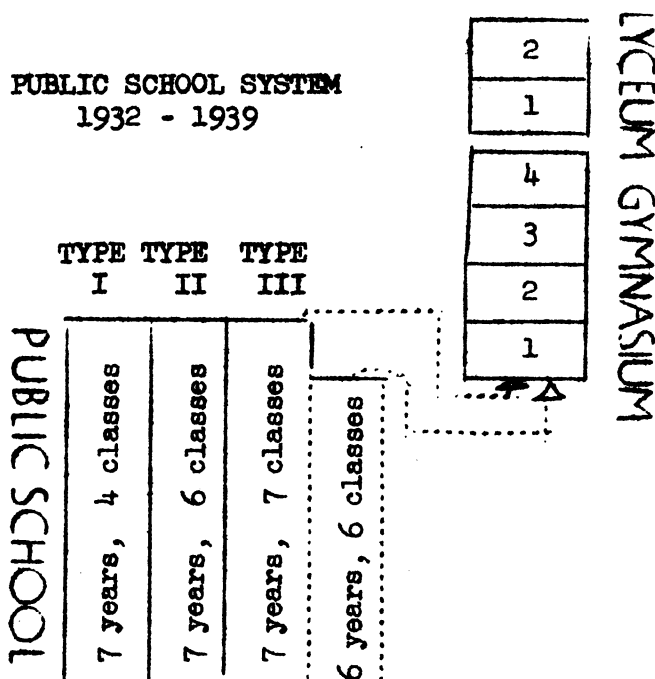
The first major school reform in 1924, under the impetus of Stanislaw Grabski, the Polish Minister of Education, changed curricula but failed to change the parallel structures of the public school and gymnasium.

In March of 1932, the so-called Jedrzejewicz reform was introduced. The avowed purpose of this reform was to establish a unified educational system embracing all school levels. Each higher grade of school was to be based on the one below and be derived from it. To effect this, four basic grades of education, elementary school, gymnasium, lyceum and university were instituted. Only the first of these remained tuition free. The elementary school, according to the aims of the reform, was to be the basis of the whole system of

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\* Therese Bach, "Education in Poland", Bureau of Education, U. S. Dept. of Interior, Bulletin No. 41, 1922, page 6.

Polish education. Actually, however, the public elementary school varied according to three organizational and curricular types.



The first type had a seven-year course, but only four classes, one to two teachers and one to two class rooms. The second type had a seven-year course with six classes, three to four teachers and three to four class rooms. The third and best type of elementary school had a seven-year course with seven classes and five or more teachers. As far as elementary education was concerned, the lowest type of school, type one, predominated. According to the census of 1937-38, the last census in Poland, 67.2% of all elementary schools were of type one, 16.7% of type two and only 16.1% of type three. Schools of the first type were mostly concentrated in rural areas as is illustrated by the following chart.

DISTRIBUTION OF VARIOUS TYPES OF ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS  
DURING 1937-38

Type of school	RURAL DISTRICTS		CITIES	
	No. of schools	% of rural schools	No. of schools	% of urban schools
I	18,295	72.5	0	0
II	4,422	17.6	135	6.3
III	2,353	9.7	2027	93.7
Total	25,070	100.0	2162	100.0

Since graduates of Type I public school were not admitted to gymnasium (secondary schools), with the exception of unusual cases when graduates were allowed to take an entrance examination, peasant children were almost doomed to ignorance.

It must be mentioned that the Jedrzejowicz reform also introduced changes in the structure of the secondary school. A four-year gymnasium replaced the previous eight-year gymnasium. It is interesting to note that the children entering gymnasium did not have to be graduates of the 7-year elementary school, but could enter gymnasium after completing their sixth year. The remainder of the children, the very great majority, attended the seventh grade of elementary school. Thus the seventh grade of elementary school and the first grade of gymnasium ran parallel as far as the age of students is concerned, but diverged widely in curricula and syllaba. A graduate of the seventh grade of elementary school was still only allowed to enter the first grade of secondary school. The gymnasium was followed by a two-year lyceum, which was a direct preparation for admittance to the University and higher technological institutes.

A comparison of figures shows that in 1937-38, 900 of our 1000 children started elementary school, 350 finished elementary school, 50 started secondary school and only one was admitted to a university.

## EDUCATION DURING WORLD WAR II

"The Poles do not need universities or secondary schools. The Polish lands are to be changed into an intellectual desert (eine intellektuelle Wueste)", declared Hans Frank, German Governor General of Poland. The Germans did all in their power to realize this aim of Frank. Only a small number of primary schools were allowed to function, and even in these, everything regarding Poland - its history, its geography, its literature, its art and tradition, was banned. These few schools were allowed because of the German theory that even slaves are less valuable if they are entirely illiterate. During the later years of the occupation a few technical schools were opened because of Germany's great need for skilled workers, but the training was limited to simple techniques lest the students become too proficient in their trade.

Hand in hand with the destruction of schools went the planned elimination of school personnel and facilities. All pre-war textbooks were confiscated. Teachers were systematically murdered throughout the whole period of German occupation and there were cities in Poland where not one teacher was left. Losses sustained by Poland in the educational field have not as yet been finally and accurately determined. Available figures indicate that 25.2% of the entire pre-war teaching staff was lost during the war. 90% of all school equipment, laboratories and other facilities was either destroyed or transferred to Germany.

The vicious German plan to exterminate Polish education and culture met with strong opposition from the entire Polish population. "Secret education" became a by-word in all Poland. In spite of arrests and executions, secondary and higher education existed in Poland. Secret schools were often held by candle-light in cellars or lofts, in the forest or in caves. The classes had to be kept very small and the meeting places changed frequently to avoid detection. As early as 1939 a Joint Committee for Education was set up and in 1940 it created the underground Department of Education. This Department of Education coordinated underground educational activities on all levels, trained teachers, prepared programs, issued textbooks, diplomas and matriculation certificates. 1,500,000 children attended secret elementary school courses where forbidden subjects were taught; 60,000 benefited from secret secondary schooling; 6,000 students attended secret universities. Numerous examples of heroism and ingenuity in perpetuating Polish education could be cited. A Faculty of Medicine, for example, operated under cover of a sanitation school, one of the few technical schools allowed by the Germans. The program of underground education could never have been so effective were it not for the fact that it received the blessing and help of large sections of the Polish people.

With the liberation of Poland began the tremendous task of reconstruction in all fields, including that of education. Because it was imperative that the educational system start functioning immediately, no changes in structure and curricula were introduced during the first period following the liberation, although such changes were recognized as desirable.

In June, 1945, a nationwide Educational Conference was held in Lodz and was attended by 685 delegates from all walks of life. There were educators, scholars, representatives of the clergy, political parties, professional and social organizations, who came together to work out an educational reform. From their deliberations and the compromises of their various viewpoints, a plan was finally



evolved. This plan for reform was further modified after wide and heated discussions in the Polish press.

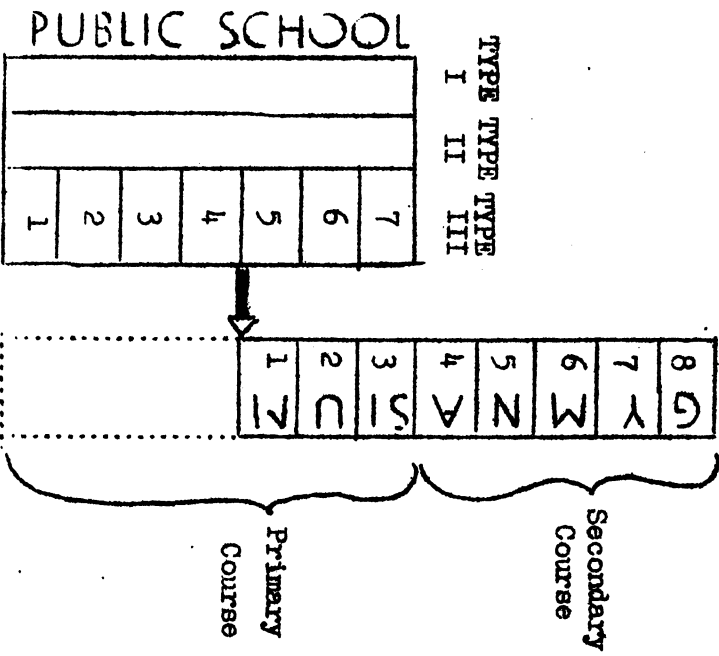
After the liberation the traditional slogan of a unified school system again came to the foreground. The purpose of the new reform was to put this aim into practice by building a truly unified structure - each higher grade of school to be based on the one below. First comes kindergarten for children between the ages of four and seven. The basis, however, of the reformed school system is an 8-year primary school covering children between the ages of seven and fifteen, followed by a 4-year secondary school, both of which are free and compulsory. The certificates awarded in the secondary schools, the so-called "lycea", are in turn to be requisites for higher education.

The reform further endeavored to eliminate the one-room schoolhouses. This goal has been almost completely realized. Thus the new reform for the first time in the history of Poland realized the old objective of a unified school system. (See graph Page 7) There are no parallelisms in terms of schools for the privileged and underprivileged children. At present there still remain schools of the pre-war type, as well as the newer reformed schools. It is estimated that the full realization of compulsory, tuition-free primary and secondary education will be effected within a period of ten years. The chief concern is to provide for the needs of the largest number of children during this transitional period.

# THREE POLISH SCHOOL REFORMS

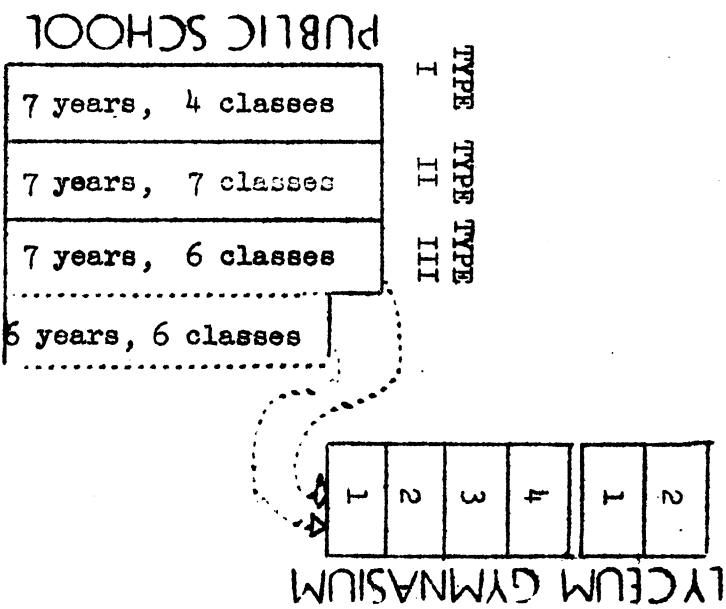
## 1924 REFORM

(In existence till 1932)

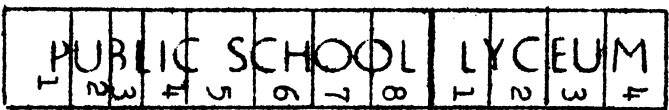


## 1932 REFORM

(In existence till 1939)



## PRESENT REFORM



## EDUCATION TODAY

### Pre-School Training

Pre-school training for children between the ages of 4 and 7 has as its main purpose the supplementing of normal home education. Many local communities have passed ordinances making attendance at kindergarten compulsory for those children whose mothers work or who are otherwise unable to devote themselves to their children. Kindergartens are organized and maintained by the state and by local governments. Parents may, however, choose to send their children to private kindergartens, such as those operated by social agencies, trade unions and religious organizations.

It is estimated that 60% of Polish children are in need of kindergarten care. This great need is attributed to the high incidence of orphans, to the large percentage of women employed in industry and in the professions and to the inadequate housing which still prevails in Poland.

Today 12% of pre-school age children benefit from kindergartens. This can be considered a great step forward when one remembers that before the war (1938-39) only 2.1% attended kindergarten, and that during the war no pre-school training existed.

### PRIMARY SCHOOLS (SZKOLA POWSZECHNA)

The elementary school forms the basis of the entire system of Polish education and is compulsory and free. In contrast to the pre-war school, which lasted 7 years, the present elementary school consists of eight consecutive one-year classes. Thus the educational level of the people is in the process of being raised. To fully implement the outlined program of primary education it is estimated that a teaching staff of 108,000 and 86,000 school rooms are needed. Poland now possesses 75,000 teachers and 57,500 school rooms on the primary level. However, it is worthwhile to note that two years after the war a larger percentage of children received the benefits of primary education than before the war. In 1938-39, 90.8 per cent of children of school age attended primary school, while in the year 1945-46, the percentage rose to 92.5%.

### SECONDARY SCHOOLS (LYCEUM)

There are two types of lycea, one for general academic education and the other for technical courses, both of which have 4-year programs. The entrance requirement for lyceum is graduation from a primary school. These lycea are products of the new reform. In addition to the above lycea, there still remain 4-year gymnasias based on the six-year elementary schools, but these are temporary remnants of the old school system. A gradual transition leading to the complete elimination of the gymnasias is under way and already the lowest class of the four-year gymnasium has gone out of existence.

As with the primary schools, secondary schools after the war also experienced a marked increase over pre-war attendance and this in spite of setbacks suffered during the war. The secondary school enrollment rose from 6.5 students per thousand of population in academic schools plus 6.8 in technical schools in the year 1937-38, to 9.4 and 12.7 respectively for the school year 1946-47. An

additional substantial increase has been noticed in the latest enrollment but the exact statistics are not yet available.

#### SPECIAL SCHOOLS FOR DEFECTIVE CHILDREN

The new school reform put forth as one of its objectives the provision of special schooling for handicapped children. This objective has been partially realized by the creation of three schools for the blind, nine schools for the deaf, five for delinquent children and 35 schools for the mentally retarded. All are eight-year schools with eight one-year classes.

#### SCHOOL ORGANIZATION AND ADMINISTRATION

The present administrative school system is essentially the same as that which existed before the war. It is unified under the authority of the Minister of Education.\* For administrative purposes Poland is divided into 14 school circuits, each headed by a curator appointed by the President on the recommendation of the Minister of Education. The appointed curators must also be approved by the Council of Ministers. The curators have wide powers in the field of public school and pre-school administration.

The 14 districts are further divided into 283 smaller units, each headed by an inspector. The functions of the school inspector fall into three categories: 1) he represents the curator in the sphere of elementary education; 2) he mediates between the higher school authorities and the teachers; 3) he mediates between the municipality and the school.

#### TEACHERS

The training of teachers is essential to a new school system. Right now it presents the Polish people with a difficult problem. Their problem is accentuated by the fact that 25% of the pre-war number of teachers was lost during the war and another 5% have found more remunerative positions in other professions. Because of this great shortage of teachers it is necessary today to place on teaching staffs people without full qualifications. The requirements for a qualified primary school teacher are that he must have completed his secondary education and have been graduated from a two-year pedagogic college (*lycea pedagogiczne*). In addition he must serve two years as a "trial teacher" in a primary school, after which time he can take his qualifying examination. Because of the post-war shortage of teachers an emergency program was created which is still in existence. Pedagogic courses of six weeks to six months duration are given to graduates of secondary schools who wish to enter the teaching profession. Such teachers are considered unqualified and temporary. They are, however, given the opportunity to gain qualification by participating in evening pedagogic and college classes, correspondence and summer courses.

Qualified teachers of secondary schools must possess a master's degree, complete a period of trial teaching and take a special teacher's examination. Because secondary school teachers are very much in demand, those who do not meet the above requirements may still gain the status of qualified teachers if they

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\* The present Minister of Education is Stanislaw Skrzyszewski.

pass a special examination. For all teachers, qualified as well as unqualified, special courses are organized by the Ministry of Education in order to acquaint the teachers with the newest findings in educational theory and practice, as well as in their respective fields of specialization. During the summer months 100 courses for 6,000 teachers were organized in various resort towns.

## CURRICULUM

Hand in hand with changes in the structural system of the primary and secondary schools came changes in the school curricula. Stronger emphasis is placed on perceptive aids in learning; mathematics and the natural sciences are more systematically and fully treated; and an acquaintance with Polish democratic tradition is fostered. The curricula generally include the teaching of the Polish language - grammar, writing and literature; history of Poland and Europe; geography, sciences, art, foreign languages and religion. Recently compulsory instruction in one foreign language was introduced in the upper classes of the primary schools. Students have a choice of English, French, Russian or German. In addition, Latin is taught to the students of the academic lycea.

Religious instruction by priests is provided in each school, and while participation is not compulsory, most students do avail themselves of this instruction.

Directly connected with the implementation of the new curricula is the question of an adequate number of textbooks. When Poland was liberated, many of the schools opened without textbooks. In those schools where one or two textbooks were available, teachers and children copied them at home in longhand. The situation is quite different today. A special government textbook publishing house, the P.Z.W.S., has been very efficient in supplying the country's need for textbooks. Up to January, 1947, the PZWS had published 15,000,000 textbooks, and with the new school year an additional 20,000,000 were released.

This rapid growth in the publishing of textbooks is an indication of the large amount of money and effort which is being expended in developing Poland's educational system. As the Christian Monitor of June 7, 1946, stated: "For the first time in Poland's history education is put on almost the same level as defense". 10.5% of the Polish national budget is now being spent on education. In 1920, after the first World War, when Poland faced a similar problem in school reconstruction, educational expenditures amounted to only 2%.

At this point the question may very well present itself as to the character of Polish education. The independent and democratic character of Polish education was demonstrated in a speech delivered before the Lodz Educational Conference by Zanna Kormanowa, head of the Department of Educational Programs, Ministry of Education, who stated:

"Under conditions where private initiative and enterprise are not only looked upon with favor, but encouraged, and when there is private ownership of land, there can be no talk of communist methods of education, which negate private ownership of the means of production. Our schools must be suited to reality - that is they must be democratic and national."

At his same conference, which gave birth to Poland's new educational system, the following precepts were adopted as the objectives of Polish education: regard for human dignity; love of truth, justice, freedom and peace; a sound attitude toward work; the furthering of a healthy national pride coupled with self-criticism; the elimination of all remnants of Nazi ideology; and the furthering of the principle of international cooperation.