

The 1999 Education Reform: An Analysis of the Reform Implementation and Impact on Arts Education in Poland

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Abstract— The aim of this paper is to present the process and impact of the education reform of 1999 in the curricula and ways of implementation of this reform at pre-school institutions, primary schools, lower secondary schools (gimnazja) and upper secondary schools (post-gymnasium schools) taking into account the artistic education. We present an introduction to the Polish education system, its reform and authorities in charge of the implementation of this reforms, analyze the structure and validation of the programs to finish with a reflection on art education.

Keywords— Education, Reform, Poland, School

I. INTRODUCTION

In Poland the right to education and the freedom of teaching are integral part of our rights and it is clearly stated in the Constitution. The legislative acts which regulates the functioning of the education system for youths and adults is the Education System Act of 7.09.1991, which was amended in the following years: 1995, 1998, 2001, 2002 and 2003.

It is important to underline that in Poland, it is compulsory the education of children until the completion of the age of 18 and this educational obligation is fulfilled by attending a primary school and a gymnasium. Last year's we have seen a huge increased of the implementation of private schools with some special directions like plastic arts, music, drama, languages. This has been possible thanks the Reform of the education system - introduced in 1999. After this important Reform in the Education System, we can find that the responsible bodies schools can be of two types:

- Public (state)
- Non-public schools: These schools can be civic (social), church or private

From 1st January 1999, public schools and educational institutions has different bodies that coordinate and safeguard the quality of education and that coordinate all activities to be taken into account in the youth education. The different bodies are as following:

- Minister of National Education and Sport: his mission is to co-ordinate and execute the state educational policy
- Superintendent (Kurator) – is part of the Education Board, working for the provincial governor in the province. His tasks and responsibilities are in the field of education in particular after the Act of 7th September 1991.[1] The Superintendent determines the appointment in the region of at

least one vice-superintendent (wicekuratora). The jurisdiction is at regional level and implement the policy of the Minister of Education in a state (voivodship);

- Counties (Powiats) authorities: they concentrate their actions at district level and are in charge of managing post-gymnasium and post-secondary schools. Major cities normally have the status of both gmina and powiat. [2]

- Municipal (Gminas) authorities: they coordinate and implement the central decisions at local level and their tasks are concentrated in running primary and lower secondary schools. In determining the principles of financial management in relation to maintained schools and institutions municipality retains a large measure of independence.

- School Headmasters: Their role are to recruit on the basis of an open competition students for their institutions and employ staff with the qualifications. [3]

II. EDUCATION SYSTEM IN POLAND AFTER THE REFORM OF 1999

Until September 1999 the 8 years of primary school, ages 7 to 15 led to the "Certificate of Completion of Primary School" and it was the first stage of education in Poland. After primary school, students could apply for admission to secondary, general or vocational schools. Secondary education covered the age group 15 to 18.

In the early 1990 the system was extended by adding new marks, 1 and 6. In this moment we have marks from 1 to 6 where 1 is insufficient, 2 poor, 3 is sufficient, 4 good, 5 very good and 6 is excellent. In the new system, 1 is the failing grade and 6 means that the student exceeded the expectations. Marks are given only in the superior classes in primary school. In the first stages of primary school there are not marks and teachers write descriptions of their pupils' abilities (I-III classes).

A. Structure of the Education System in Poland

The structure of the Education System in Poland after the reform of 1999 (See figure I and II) [4] can be divides as following:

- primary school: 6-year
- gymnasium: It takes 3-year and constitutes the lower secondary level of education. Their teaching activities pursues in a broad profiles, introducing pupil to the world of knowledge, helping to develop social skills and competences for the further education.

- Post-gymnasium schools: 3-year general secondary school leading up to matura examination.
- 3-year profiled lyceum – providing general education and offering tuition in individual general vocational profiles, leading up to matura examination;
- 4-year technical secondary school – awarding vocational qualification diploma. Furthermore, the matura certificate can be achieved after graduation from the fourth grade of the school;
- 2-year supplementary lyceum – leading up to matura examination, for graduates of basic vocational schools who wish to continue their education and obtain a complete secondary education;
- 2-3 year basic vocational school – awarding vocational qualification diploma, followed up in a supplementary lyceum or supplementary technicum. Completion of the supplementary schools allows graduates to take matura examination;
- 3-year supplementary technical secondary school – awarding vocational qualification diploma, leading up to matura examination, for basic vocational schools graduates;
- up to 2,5 year post-lyceum school – awarding a vocational qualification diploma, for graduates of general secondary education.

There are special teacher training colleges that prepares pre-school and primary school teachers and for training foreign language teachers. After three years of training period and final exams, the candidate can graduates and receive a diploma of higher vocational studies that allow them to continue their studies at the Master’s level.

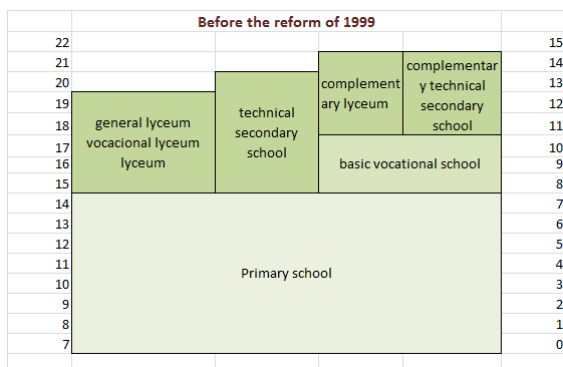


FIGURE 1. EDUCATION SYSTEM IN POLAND BEFORE 1999.

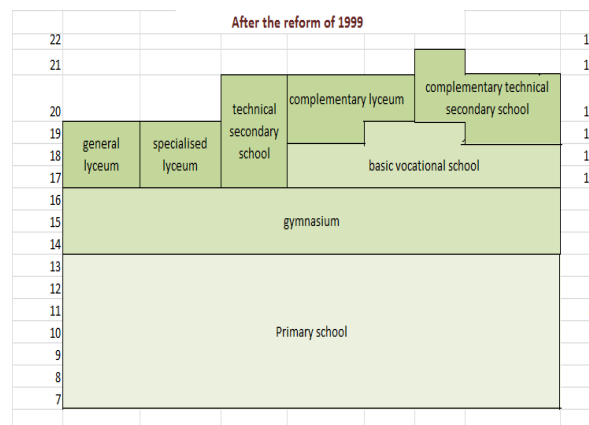


FIGURE 2. EDUCATION SYSTEM IN POLAND AFTER 1999

B. Validation System

In mid-2013, the Referencing Report describing the new qualifications system and referencing the Polish Qualifications Framework to the European Qualifications Framework was adopted by the Polish government and presented at an international forum.[4] In this report we find the integrated qualifications system that will consist of several interrelated components: the Polish Qualifications Framework, an integrated qualifications register, qualifications quality standards, standards for validating competencies, as well as a credit accumulation and transfer system.

The Polish Qualifications Framework, like the European Qualifications Framework, takes into account learning outcomes achieved in formal education as well as in other ways and reflect the progress achieved by a learner within the scope of knowledge, skills and social competence.[5]

The classification of vocational occupations was developed by the Ministry of National Education and serves to indicate the directions of vocational training in the school system. We should underline that as of September 1999 – vocational school graduation has been separated from acquisition of the vocational title.

In the former system, the school headmasters were responsible for certification, evaluation and issuing of matura and vocational title diplomas. After the reform, has been developed some regional examination commissions that are responsible for certification, evaluation of knowledge and issuing diplomas. The educational reform introduces two systems of pupils’ performance: Internal and external.

Internal: to inform about the progress student has made an in-house function. External: to obtain external verification of skills and knowledge. It is closely linked to the standards and requirements of the examination system; it consists of the following elements:

- Primary schools pupils have tests at the end of the study period. This test will provide information about areas they have mastered and which they still need to work on.

➤ Pre-orientation examinations at the end of gymnasium are prepared and passed to pupil at the end of the study period; these exams will sum up all the work of a pupil in gymnasium and will help decide which school he/she should choose

➤ Matura examination till 2014 and from 2015 called "New Matura" will be given to graduates of lyceums and supplementary lyceums and will replace university entrance exams. This reforms were developed by the Central Examination Board that was established on 1 January 1999. By the Sejm and under the Act of 25 July 1998. amending the Act on the education system (Dz.U. nr 117 poz.759).

➤ The examination confirming vocational qualifications is given from 2004 for graduates of vocational schools and post-lyceum schools. This examination confirms qualifications identified in the list of occupations for school system; the exam is held at an accreditation "examination center", a school, an educational institution, or an employer.

Responsible for conducting the examination is the Central Examination Board, which are subject to Regional Examination involved in preparing and carrying out high school in the region. This central system of examination boards in Poland is called "Centralna Komisja Egzaminacyjna" ("Central Examination Board") and was established within the new legislation on education issued by Polish parliament in 1998 (<http://www.cke.edu.pl/>).

III. SCHOOL OF ARTS AND ARTS AT SCHOOL

In accordance with the Minister of National Education Regulation of the 15th of February 1999 defining the types of public and non-public schools of arts, and laying down the rules for their functioning, the following types of schools were introduced from the 1st of September 1999:

- Lower-Level Schools of Music (certificate of completion of the lower-level school of music)
- General Lower-Level Schools of Music (certificate of completion of education in the general lower-level school of music)
- Upper-Level Schools of Music (diploma of completion of upper-level school of music)
- General Upper-Level Schools of Music (maturity certificate of the lyceum of music)
- General School of Fine Arts (maturity certificate of the general school of fine arts)
- Lyceum of Fine Arts (maturity certificate of the lyceum of fine arts)
- General School of Ballet (certificate and/or maturity certificate of the school of ballet)

On 12 March 2008, the Minister of Culture and the Minister of Education signed the agreement on cooperation according to which art classes and music classes return to schools. [6] In the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage, an expert team was created to prepare the programme for these classes. According to the new core curriculum implemented

since 1 September 2009, the arts education includes subjects like: music, art, history of music, history of art, Latin, Antic culture, and cultural knowledge

In the figure III we present a study done by EURYCE on December 2009. [7] In this map we can see that in Poland as in other European countries, professional artists are not often involved in actual teaching at primary and lower secondary level. This situation did not change much in 2015 and we can find that to teach the arts subjects in schools, teacher should not be professional artists but only have to complete professional teacher trainings.

The Ministry of Education defines only the minimum number of hours per 3 years of education in the field of art education but not the way it should be implemented at school. The timetabling of classes and how these subjects are realised depends on the headmaster of the school and he is the only one responsible for distributing: 30 hours of music, 30 hours of art, 60 hours of artistic classes and 60 hours of technical courses.

This is the reason why the classes can be implemented as regular, weekly classes or as an artistic project even though, the role of art teacher becomes more and more responsible and requires high professional qualifications and practical skills.[8]

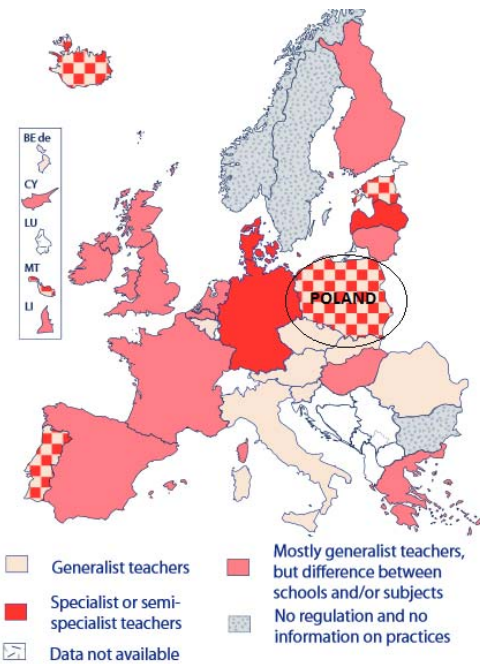


FIGURE 3. ART TEACHERS AT PRIMARY SCHOOL

(source Eurydice www.eurydice.org)

IV. CONCLUSION

Education in Poland is regulated by the government and the right to education is guaranteed in the Constitution but the final decision are always from the parents. Children can start their school adventure at the age of five or six for the '0' class or Kindergarten and six or seven years in the 1st class of primary school. It is compulsory that children participate in

one year of formal education before entering the 1st class at no later than 7 years of age.

At the end of the 6th class when students are about 13, pupils take a compulsory exam that will determine their acceptance and transition into a specific lower secondary school (Middle School/Junior High) called gimnazjum. Pupils will attend this middle school for a period of three years (classes 7 to 9) and in the end will take another compulsory exam to determine the upper secondary level school they will attend.

In this moment the young student has several alternatives but the most common is the three years in a *liceum* or four years in a *technikum* that end in a final exam too. This exam is maturity examination (*matura*), and may be followed by several forms of Higher education.

The reforming the school has not yet formed in their wards a clear picture of the modern world, it has been difficult to implement clear regulations and in general does not teach good understanding, not introduces young people to the necessary balance of opportunities and threats.

The education at school is exclusively theoretical knowledge and there is very little practical subjects making them specialist of the past but not prepared for the future. The education system still lacks interdisciplinary knowledge of man and humanity and creation of the humanistic model of education.

Concerning Art lessons at primary level, we find that arts teachers are usually generalist teachers. They teach all or most of the curriculum subjects, without taking into account the talent or inclination of the pupils.

In Poland, they receive training in more than one arts subjects, most often visual arts and music, which are compulsory subjects in at school curricula at primary level. At secondary level the situation change a little because arts education is taught by specialist teachers for whom demonstrating arts skills in a specific arts subject before

becoming an arts teacher is usually a requirement and we do not find the same person teaching music, arts and ballet.

The role of art teacher becomes more and more complex and requires high professional qualifications not only concerning the subject to be taught but also about practical skills. At the same time it is necessary a theoretical understanding of the visual arts and music, based on philosophical thinking, which helps in the objective vision and proper evaluation of aesthetic values.

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