

The Subject of Girls' Education in School Reforms from the National Education Commission to World War II

Abstract

At the end of the 18th century and during the partitions, the education of young females constituted a separate educational track. At elementary level, young females had access to regular schools. At secondary level, private and monastic schools dominated. The government's first interference with the education of young females was, perhaps, the attempt by the Commission of National Education to establish a permanent supervision of certain female schools (under legislation from 1775).

The laws regarding education in each partition were not commensurate with the growing educational aspirations of women and the general socio-economic conditions. The Russian Partition was characterised by the dual existence of Polish private schools and governmental schools focused on the Russification of young Polish females. In Galicia, the most controversial issue was the creation of female secondary schools, the completion of which would enable a young woman to pursue university studies. Only during the Second Polish Republic did female education achieve equality before the law.

Keywords: girls' education, educational reforms, schools, Poland

In the nearly one hundred and fifty years from the founding of the National Education Commission to the outbreak of World War II, there were a considerable number of reforms of Polish schools or those affecting Polish society, undertaken and carried out in very different political and social conditions. The issue of girls' education was also considered in the decisions regarding the functioning of education. Until the establishment of the independent Polish state, the girls' and boys' educations were two separate educational tracks, which were interconnected at the elementary level, diverging at the post-primary and secondary levels and then converged again at the higher education level. At the elementary level, the reforms carried out affected all of the education at the level, and the issue of girls' education was considered one element of the process. At the post-primary and secondary levels, many of the reforms concerned exclusively girls' education and they also

provoked the most discussions. Decisions in this sphere were influenced not only by political, economic and organisational factors, but also by philosophical issues and traditions that determined the attitude of society and the authorities to the so-called “Girls’ matter,” as well as the demands of real life in the dynamically changing conditions of the 19th and 20th centuries, which, for example, forced women to take on gainful employment that required higher qualifications. Girls’ entry into universities, on the other hand, was achieved not through reforms, but thanks to the agreement to girls’ entry into traditionally-functioning structures without entailing a change in the way they operated.

At the primary school level, decisions regarding girls’ education were made as part of individual reforms concerning parish or folk schools. In the 18th century, it was a well-established tradition that girls attended parish schools along with boys, and this state of affairs was not changing. Decisions regarding girls thus concerned certain curricular differences, hiring female teachers for the education of girls, or considerations of age limits and co-educational conditions.

Similarly, the decisions of the National Education Commission relating to girls’ education consisted largely of acceptance of the existing state of things¹. In *Acts of the National Education Commission* from 1783 – an essential document encompassing the entirety of the reform regulations – in the chapter on parish schools, there is no separate mention of girls, let alone of separate girls’ schools or different curricula². Slightly more information on the subject can be found in Grzegorz Piramowicz’s *The Teacher’s Duties*, which may be regarded as an interpretation of the Commission’s rules. Piramowicz uses the term “children” without distinguishing them according to gender. There is only one fragment where he mentions boys and girls separately – the beginning of the chapter “On the goal, the duties of the teacher.” This is also the fragment in which he outlines the goal of teaching and upbringing in a parish school³.

In *Duties*, there is also an addendum “On school mistresses of the Girls’ sex,” which is important because it is the first time women teachers in parish schools are mentioned, but also because it contains a lot of information about the upbringing and education of girls. According to Piramowicz, the goal of educating a girl was to prepare her for exemplary fulfilment of the role of a mother, wife, housekeeper, “servant” and “worker.” The parish school curriculum was to be essentially the same for boys and girls in terms of reading, writing, arithmetic, religious and moral education. Differentiation occurred in the field of practical subjects. “Not all teachings are equally necessary for boys and young girls,” Piramowicz claimed. Girls should acquire knowledge and skills related to household management. “The school mistress will put in more time on these matters with her Girls’ stu-

¹ POHOSKA, H., *Sprawa oświaty ludu w dobie Komisji Edukacji Narodowej*, Kraków 1925, p. 80.

² *Ustawy Komisji Edukacji Narodowej dla Stanu Akademickiego i na szkoły w krajach Rzeczypospolitej przepisane w Warszawie roku 1783*, Lwów 1917, p. 116.

³ PIRAMOWICZ, G., *Powinności nauczyciela*, oprac. vol. Mizia, Warsaw 1988, p. 93.

dents,” Piramowicz wrote, “than in school on reading and writing.” Thus, practical goals were to be predominant⁴.

In the period of the Duchy of Warsaw, the achievements and traditions of the National Education Commission were drawn on. The Chamber of Education, which administered educational policy, devoted much attention to elementary education, attempting to pave the way for the principle of universality. “The setup of municipal and rural elementary schools,” approved on 12 January 1808, as well as the “Regulations of municipal and rural elementary schools,” published on 16 October 1808, permeated with the spirit of the Enlightenment and Pestalozzi’s recommendations, provided the legal basis for the entire system of folk education. It was recommended that every village and city should have a school. Compulsory schooling was established (without compulsory attendance), to be carried out by school supervisory units. These were obliged to register all children of both genders – starting at 8 years old in the country and 7 years old in the cities. A child was to attend school until age 11 or 12, “until they have acquired the necessary knowledge.” The curriculum for girls, in addition to the general programme (reading, writing, arithmetic, moral and religious education, health and agricultural education, geometry, measure and weights, law), included the study of girls’ and household work⁵.

“The Chamber of Education encouraged girls to be sent to primary schools along with boys in villages and cities, and even employed teachers of girls’ work in city schools, but the higher spheres did not want to send their daughters there,” writes Jan Hulewicz⁶. The number of girls in primary schools was generally 12–40%⁷.

The popularisation of the folk school was one of the most important school and social issues in the 19th century – the state authorities began to care about extending education to the greatest possible number of subjects and shaping them into useful and loyal citizens. Hence the efforts to introduce compulsory education, supported over time with compulsory school attendance, as well as consent to co-education at the level of the folk school. Both the introduction of compulsory education and co-education were beneficial to girls. Compulsory education obligated parents or guardians to send girls to school, which was important as their education was usually considered of secondary importance. The existence of co-educational schools made it possible to fulfil this obligation, since there were generally no economic and organisational conditions in Europe that would allow for the simultaneous functioning of boys’ and girls’ schools in one village or town. During the partitions, the situation of girls in folk schools depended on the general education policy of individual partitioning states.

Positive changes initiated by the Chamber of Education were halted during the period of Kingdom of Poland. According to the Act for Gymnasiums, Regional, Primary and

⁴ Ibidem., p. 159–160.

⁵ WINIARZ, A., *Szkolnictwo Księstwa Warszawskiego i Królestwa Polskiego (1807–1831)*, Lublin 2002, p. 98–102; KOT, S., *Historia wychowania*, vol. 2, Warsaw 1996, p. 242; POZNAŃSKI, K., “Osiągnięcia polskich reform szkolnych w XIX wieku”, *Kwartalnik Pedagogiczny*, 1995 no. 3, p. 149.

⁶ KOT, S., op. cit, vol. 2, p. 246.

⁷ WINIARZ, A., op. cit., p. 111.

Parish Schools in Kingdom of Poland” of 1833, children of both genders who were over 8 years of age, could be admitted to parish schools, but girls could not be older than 11. As enrolment at the schools was carried out annually, this regulation meant that boys could study much longer. The number of girls in individual schools varied, but there were cases where they made up as much as half of the student body. Separate classes for female students were even created in 29 schools where funding was available⁸.

As a result of another educational law in 1851, not only was the Kingdom of Poland education system unified with the Russian one, but it was also ruined, among other things, by abolishing compulsory education. The school reform undertaken by Wielopolski in 1862 was an attempt to rebuild Polish education. Wielopolski was in favour of introducing compulsory education under pain of financial penalties, but he did not receive the consent of the Russian authorities. Primary schools were to be created in every municipality and be available to all children. The outbreak of the January Uprising prevented this reform from being implemented.

The defeat of Russia in the Crimean War forced Alexander II to carry out a number of social and economic reforms. The most important of them was the enfranchisement reform in the countryside. On 30 August/11 September 1864, the Tsar approved draft laws in Jügenheim and issued an official rescript setting out a new course for educational policy in Kingdom of Poland. In the Russian Partition, this course was associated with increased Russification. In terms of the situation of girls in primary schools, these reforms did not bring about any fundamental changes, and the lack of compulsory education most likely had a more negative impact on girls than on boys⁹.

Standing out with its achievements in the field of educational organisation since the beginning of the 19th century was Prussia¹⁰, where a universal, uniform and compulsory primary education system was the first and most effective to be created. Because folk schools were to serve important political purposes, all children, regardless of gender, were ordered to attend school. An act in 1825 introduced compulsory education in Greater Poland and Pomerania for children aged 6 to 14, enforced under severe penalties. School acts from 1872 created the foundations of the modern primary education system. The school programme was extended, among other areas, to practical subjects, taught in a broader scope. For the girls, compulsory classes included practical work and later agricultural subjects. Such modernised schools survived until 1914, and the reforms brought a measurable effect

⁸ POZNAŃSKI, K., *Oświata i szkolnictwo w Królestwie Polskim 1831–1869. Lata zmagania i nadziei, Przebudowa systemu szkolnictwa i wychowania w Królestwie Polskim w latach 1831–1839*, vol. 1, Warsaw 2001, p. 56, 59. This act was modeled on the Russian act of 1828, and clearly emphasised the social class character of education.

⁹ Idem, *Reforma szkolna w Królestwie Polskim w 1862 roku*, Wrocław 1968, p. 283; KOT, S., op. cit., vol. 2, p. 297.

¹⁰ MIAŚO, J., “Reformy oświatowe w Prusach, Austrii i Rosji i ich wpływ na szkolnictwo na ziemiach polskich w drugiej połowie XIX wieku,” *Kwartalnik Pedagogiczny*, 1995, no. 3, p. 124; POZNAŃSKI K., *Osiągnięcia polskich reform*, p. 141.

in the form of eliminating illiteracy. For Poles, however, the functioning of a state-controlled school meant Germanisation¹¹.

Austria immediately extended its own education legislation to the lands taken over as a result of the Partitions. According to the regulations developed by Johann Ignaz Felbiger, there was to be a folk school, also called trivial, where children were to learn reading, writing and arithmetic, as well as practical news, with handiwork also planned for girls. The schools could be co-educational, but boys and girls had to sit separately. All active schools were German and had to serve Germanisation¹². The situation of girls in these schools was also not changed by the Act of 1805, known as the Political Act, which comprehensively regulated the issue of elementary education and remained in effect until Galicia gained autonomy¹³.

Subsequent reforms, already liberal in spirit, were brought about in the mid-1860s and related to the internal changes in the Habsburg monarchy. On 14 May 1869, a nationwide act on folk schools was passed, which initiated the construction of a modern primary school, providing general education, public, uniform and compulsory, “which over time became one of the most important factors of civilizational progress and the increase in the self-knowledge of nations and nationalities under the Habsburg rule¹⁴.”

The act provided for the existence of a five-year folk school and, based on its sub-structure, a three-year departmental school. The schools were to be supervised by school councils. The act introduced compulsory education for children aged 6 to 14. Uniform general curricula were created, without emphasising their utilitarian orientation. Girls, however, were required to learn girls’ work and housekeeping¹⁵.

On the basis of this act, the Galicia state authorities issued the “Act on Establishing and Maintenance of Public Folk Schools and the Obligation to Send Children to Them” on 2 May 1873. In relation to national law, compulsory schooling was limited to children between 6 and 12 years of age. After graduating from the folk school, children were obliged to attend Sunday schools. As far as the organisation of schools was concerned, the recommendation was: “Wherever local funding is sufficient, girls should study separately or separate girls’ schools should be established. This division must take place in schools where more than six teachers are employed. Nevertheless, the school is to be divided into two separate schools, for boys and girls, if the influx of students into the school in the last five

¹¹ MIAŚO, J., op. cit., p. 124.

¹² SUCHAN, E., *Historyczny zarys organizacji szkolnictwa elementarnego w Polsce od Komisji Edukacji Narodowej po dobę obecną*, Brześć nad Bugiem 1938, p. 64; KOT, S., op. cit., vol. 2, p. 218; POZNAŃSKI, K., *Osiągnięcia polskich reform*, p. 142.

¹³ KOT, S., op. cit., vol. 2, p. 220–221; p. 268.

¹⁴ MIAŚO, J., op. cit., p. 130–131. This act survived for a very long time, it was replaced with certain changes by a new act in 1962.

¹⁵ *Ustawy i rozporządzenia w zakresie szkół ludowych*, collected and edited by K. PIEROŻYŃSKI, Lviv 1904, p. 430; DUTKOWA, R., *Polityka szkolna w Galicji między autonomią a centralizmem (1861–1875)*, Kraków 1995, p. 133.

consecutive years was so great that it was necessary to create two coordinate divisions from the larger half of the classes¹⁶.”

Subsequent arrangements regarding the organisation of folk schools and the curriculum were made by the “Teaching plans for general folk schools” in 1893, which were of a much more conservative nature. According to them, teaching in folk schools was to be mainly practical. “Girls’ education is to be applied to the needs of the household, and boys’ education to the needs of the farm and home industry”¹⁷, it stated. As it was emphasised, “teaching girls’ handiwork is of great pedagogical importance in the rural and small-town school”¹⁸ and was to take place during boys’ gymnastics classes. The four lower grades of a folk school could be co-educational¹⁹, but “the fifth grade must be separated according to gender²⁰.” These same statements were repeated in plans from 1911²¹.

The national authorities also worked on the departmental schools, which were more important for girls who did not have the opportunity to attend secondary schools. The National Act on Public Folk Schools from 2 February 1885 ordered the creation of separate boys’ and girls’ departmental schools with a four-year course of study. Additionally, the act stated that “for girls, learning will follow their gender-specific needs and attitudes and their future positions in the family, taking into account primarily the needs of a broader general education, rather than leaving out practical needs.” Girls were therefore to be taught household work and girls’ handiwork, while “hygiene [would] be taught in as exhaustive a manner as possible²²”.

National laws in 1885 and 1895 transformed some of the departmental schools first into four-grade institutes on the basis of a five-grade public school, and then into six-grade schools. Article 14 of the “Act on Establishing and Maintenance of Public Folk Schools and the Obligation to Send Children to Them” of 23 May 1895 created a type of higher departmental school, not connected to the public school. This type of school was to be established only in larger cities²³. Michał Bobrzyński, vice-chairman of the National School Council, was a supporter of establishing such schools, believing that they should satisfy the educational aspirations of girls demanding more and more clearly the establishment of girls’ secondary schools. Renata Dutkowska writes, “the diverse functions of departmental schools are surprising, because they were treated as higher elementary girls’ schools, qua-

¹⁶ *Dziennik ustaw i rozporządzeń krajowych dla Królestwa Galicji i Lodomerii wraz z Wielkim Księstwem Krakowskim, rok 1873*, part 28, art.8, p. 182,190.

¹⁷ *Plany nauki dla szkół ludowych pospolitych wraz z instrukcją*, Lviv 1893, *Instrukcja*, p. 42.

¹⁸ *Ibidem*, s.107.

¹⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 4.

²⁰ *Ibidem*, *Uwagi dotyczące klasy V*, p. 1.

²¹ *Plany naukowe dla szkół ludowych pospolitych pięcio- i sześcioklasowych męskich, żeńskich i mieszanych wraz z instrukcją*, Lviv 1911.

²² *Dziennik ustaw i rozporządzeń...*, 1885, part 8, p. 88–89. Under the act, six departmental schools for girls were established, in Lviv, Kraków, Tarnów, Rzeszów, Stanisławów, Tarbopol, with others following later.

²³ Such schools were established in Kraków, Lviv and Rzeszów.

si-secondary (so-called secondary departmental schools), and additionally as vocational schools. Each specialisation, however, depended on the number of classes and the specific curriculum²⁴.” A school that was reformed in this way could not satisfy the supporters of emancipation currents because the limited curriculum in classical languages, mathematics and natural sciences was an effective barrier to girls’ aspirations for higher education²⁵. This school system continued in Galicia until the end of the Partitions.

At the level of elementary education, between the time of the National Education Commission and the outbreak of World War I, girls’ situation unfolded in a similar way. They were admitted to elementary schools everywhere on par with boys, but there were also efforts to introduce a gender division wherever possible. There were also curricular differences introduced in light of the future roles and tasks of women, and the upbringing ideal concerning girls was modified to account for these roles.

Attempts to describe girls’ education at the post-primary or secondary level presents much more difficulty. This is the result of the lack of uniformity in the girls’ education system, the diversity of schools intended for them, as well as difficulties in establishing whether a given school should be considered a post-primary, secondary, or perhaps primary school after all. The best example, although not the only one, is the aforementioned departmental school in Galicia, which, organisationally, was on the primary school level, although it was occasionally treated as a semi-secondary school.

The National Education Commission was responsible for the first inclusion of girls’ education in the broad reform agenda, which was also an innovative undertaking on a European scale. It resulted from the deep conviction that the education of girls is one of the pillars of patriotic and civic revival. At the same time, it contradicted the deep-rooted belief in society that girls should be brought up in their family homes under the watchful eyes of their mothers²⁶. This belief would weigh heavily on decisions concerning girls’ education throughout the first half of the 19th century.

At the beginning of its functioning, the National Education Commission began efforts to put in order the situation at the boarding homes where girls from the wealthier classes attended school. This previously neglected area of education was taken up by Prince Adam Kazimierz Czartoryski. In November 1774, he was entrusted with the supervision of boys’ and girls’ private education, and ordered to develop appropriate regulations. They were approved on 24 March 1775. They contained separate provisions for girls’ schools, which can be regarded as the first state regulations concerning these schools.

²⁴ DUTKOWA, R., *Żeńskie gimnazja Krakowa w procesie emancypacji kobiet (1896–1918)*, Kraków 1995, p. 12.

²⁵ *Ustawy i rozporządzenia w zakresie szkół ludowych*, zebrał i ułożył K. PIEROŻYŃSKI, Lviv 1904, p. 11 (art. 7), 111, 114; *Dziennik ustaw i rozporządzeń dla Królestwa Galicji i Lodomerii wraz z Wielkim Księstwem Krakowskim*. Rocznik 1895, Lviv, part 12, p. 183; DUTKOWA, R., *Żeńskie gimnazja*, p. 8.

²⁶ BARTNICKA, K., *Pensja żeńska jako substytut wychowania domowego*, [in:] *Nauczanie domowe dzieci polskich od XVIII do XX wieku*, ed. K. JAKUBIAK, A. WINIARZ, 2004, p. 168.

The document referred to all private schools throughout the Republic of Poland, with the exception of monastery schools²⁷. The category of boarding school included all dormitory institutions, approved by the Commission, which could accommodate between 10 to 12 pupils, aged between 6 and 16. Coeducation was forbidden with the exception of the first year, 1875/76²⁸. The curriculum was identical for girls and boys, with the exception of Latin, instead of which the girls had a geography class. This absence of Latin for the girls became a rule applied throughout all of the 19th century, with a heavy impact on girls' entry into higher education in the future. Much attention was paid to civic and patriotic education of female students who, as was emphasised, would in the future influence men in their immediate surroundings: brothers, husbands and sons. For the first time, the tasks of a Polish woman were clearly formulated. In the case of girls, the emphasis was placed more on social and national education than on intellectual education²⁹.

The *Acts of the National Education Commission* of 1783 did not contain a separate chapter on girls' education. In the chapter "Department Rector, Pro-Rector," there is a mention that the rector oversees all the schools in the division, including girls' boarding schools, which can be opened only with the consent of the Commission and after checking the competences and morals of the institution's founder, and which the rector has a duty to visit.

The National Education Committee failed to carry out a complete reform of girls' education. They could not bring the boarding schools under the full supervision of the state education authority. Their level of education was low, there were only a few of them and they had few students (sometimes as few as 3–4 students)³⁰.

The issue of organising the situation in girls' education was brought back on a broader scale in the times of the Duchy of Warsaw. The Chamber of Education undertook a series of efforts intended to regulate the functioning of boarding schools and private schools. Deeply imbued with the ideals of the National Education Commission and drawing on its views, the Chamber shared the Commission's ambivalent attitude towards the boarding schools, considering the family home to be the most appropriate place for raising girls, and consequently emphasised that upbringing in boarding schools was to resemble home upbringing, with upbringing functions prevailing over educational ones.

The "Public Education Plan" of 1 December 1807 contained separate regulations for regulations for the supervision of the establishing and functioning of boarding schools. In

²⁷ MITERZANKA, M., *Działalność pedagogiczna Adama księcia Czartoryskiego generała ziem podolskich*, [in:] *Prace monograficzne z dziejów wychowania i szkolnictwa w Polsce*, p. 1, no. 8, Warsaw 1931, p. 197–199.

²⁸ *Przepisy od Komisji Edukacji narodowej pensjo mistrzom i pensjo mistrzyniom dane*, [in:] *Ustawodawstwo szkolne za czasów Komisji Edukacji Narodowej. Rozporządzenia, ustawy pedagogiczne i organizacyjne (1773–1793)*, zebrał J. LEWICKI, Biblioteka Polskich Pisarzy Pedagogicznych no. 2, Kraków 1925, p. 69.

²⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 69–75; LEWICKI, J., *Komisja Edukacji Narodowej w świetle ustawodawstwa szkolnego. Szkic historyczny*, Warsaw 1923, p. 27–28; ENDER, J., "Sprawa kształcenia kobiet w dobie Komisji Edukacyjnej", *Przegląd Historyczno-Oświatowy*, 1972, no. 3, p. 471–472; p. 474.

³⁰ *Ustawy Komisji Edukacji Narodowej...*, p. 68–70; ENDER, J., *op. cit.*, p. 476–477, 481; BARTNICKA, K., *op. cit.*, p. 169.

October 1808, the first departmental supervisory bodies for boarding schools and girls' schools were established and the Chamber ordered the strongest one – from Warsaw – to carry out inspections and prepare reports. Based largely on these reports, the supervisors (with large participation of Izabella Czartoryska) developed the “Regulations for Boarding Schools and Girls’ Schools,” which were approved on the 9 March 1810. This document is considered to be the first normative Polish act comprehensively regulating the matter of girls’ education. The “Regulations” introduced a strict division of girls’ institutions into boarding schools and other schools, as well as specified their organisation, curriculum, goals for education and upbringing. The document also contained provisions on setting up a boarding school, teachers’ qualifications, supervision, as well as housing and living standards. There was a clear traditional belief evident in it that the most appropriate place for women is the home and that the most appropriate upbringing for them is a home education. A boarding school was supposed to be a kind of substitute home; therefore, it was recommended that very close care be extended over the girls there, and that the boarding school be considered a closed institution.

Boarding schools with a full curriculum were supposed to be four-year and four-grade schools. No more than 15 girls up to the age of 14 could stay in them. With the consent of the supervisory body, students not residing at the boarding school could also study there, although no more than six of them. Co-education was not permitted. The curriculum was quite broad, covering Polish, French and German, arithmetic and bookkeeping, history, geography and botany. It also included with various practical information, handiwork, information about raising children, elements of physical education and hygiene. The students had the opportunity to cultivate their “talents,” learning drawing, music and dance. However, the emphasis was placed on education based on religion and strongly imbued with the patriotic spirit. The same programme was to be used as a basis for teaching in girls’ schools.

In 1814 in the Duchy of Warsaw, there were 96 girls’ schools and girls’ boarding schools, where approx. 1050 girls were studying. The quality of teaching at the boarding schools was low, however, and they themselves did not follow the rules laid out in the “Regulations.” In addition to these, there were also relatively few religious schools³¹.

In the first years of the Kingdom of Poland, the policy of the Chamber of Education was continued. The document “Setting up Boarding Schools and Schools for Girls’ Youth” of 1821 largely reproduced the “Regulations.” In 1823, a new multi-stage Supervisory of Boarding Schools and Higher Girls’ Schools was established, headed by Minister Stanisław Grabowski, which, among others, conducted inspection visits. As a result, slightly modified regulations were issued in 1824, which precisely defined the concept of “boarding school” and the concept of “school,” as well as provided criteria for determining the lower and higher levels of organisation. In 1825, an instruction manual was published, defining the qualification requirements for schoolmistresses, governesses, teachers and tutors,

³¹ WINIARZ, A., op. cit., p. 318–321; HULEWICZ, J., *Sprawa wyższego wykształcenia kobiet w Polsce w wieku XIX*, Kraków 1939, p. 12; BARTNICKA, K., op. cit., p. 171–175; POZNAŃSKI, K., *Osiągnięcia...*, op. cit., p. 155–156.

and in late 1826, “Detailed Instruction on Teaching in Boarding Schools and Higher Girls’ Schools” was also published. All these actions were aimed at raising the level of teaching in girls’ education. The number of boarding schools in the country slowly increased. In the 1820s, there were about 65 of them³².

The shortage of teaching staff was a serious issue, especially the lack of well-prepared Polish women teachers. With this in mind, a School for Governesses was opened in 1825, renamed at the end of 1826 to Government Institute for Girls’ Education. It was the highest girls’ academic institution at the time, which accepted girls over 14 years of age who graduated from a boarding school or a three-grade school. It was also the first state girls’ school in Poland. It was intended for mostly poor unmarried women who wanted to be teachers in the future, although it was open to those who only wanted to supplement their education. The school was very popular, among others reasons, because it was easy to find a job after graduating³³.

Describing this period, Jan Hulewicz writes, “[...] one can see a sincere desire to take these schools to a higher level, but all this is done very timidly, and everywhere one can sense the desire to not violate in any way the traditional forms of education and traditional notions of the upbringing of women³⁴.”

In the difficult period between the uprisings, new provisions were made regarding the functioning of the education system in the Kingdom of Poland. From April 1840 to January 1841, the Tsar signed a number of laws and regulations, which were supposed to create new foundations of an education system, and their aim was to make the functioning of the system in the Kingdom of Poland similar to the Russian model. This was associated with an increase in Russification. These were times which, as far as girls’ education was concerned, were marked by two major trends: russification and the desire to reduce the scope of education for women. “The principle of the estates of the realm and blatantly open renunciation of any deeper scientific thought in girls’ upbringing were raised here to the levels of the chief principles of the school authorities’ pursuits³⁵”, claims Jan Hulewicz, adding, “[...] the Russian government was guided by only one directive in its school policy regarding women: to educate faithful girls’ subjects of the throne and the Russian Empire [...] The vicious fear of the patriotic atmosphere of the Polish family demanded the encircling of domestic education with extremely meticulous and strict regulations, and in the absence of state boarding schools, to tolerate the existence of private schools as the lesser evil³⁶.”

³² WINIARZ, A., op. cit., p. 322–325; POZNAŃSKI, K., *Osiągnięcia...*, op. cit., p. 169.

³³ WINIARZ, A., op. cit., p. 329–335; HULEWICZ, J., op. cit., p. 16–19; DĄBROWSKA, J., *Początki szkolnictwa żeńskiego – Instytut Guwernantek*, [in:] *Z dziejów polskiej kultury i oświaty od średniowiecza do początku XX wieku*, JAKUBIAK, K., vol. ed. MALISZEWSKI, Kraków 2012; *Szkola – państwo – społeczeństwo*, ed. R. GRZYBOWSKI, vol. 1, p. 122–123; p. 126–127.

³⁴ HULEWICZ, J., op. cit., p. 18.

³⁵ Ibidem., p. 53.

³⁶ Ibidem., p. 61.

In the 1840s, it was decided that the curriculum in girls' schools could not be broader than that of county boys' schools. Moreover, the scope of natural sciences teaching was also reduced. In 1840, the Institute for Girls' Education was renamed the Institute for Unmarried Girls' Education. It was to be a six-year school, where daughters of officers and government officials, as well as a number of girls preparing for the profession of governess were to study at the government's expense. "The content of the lessons was unceremoniously bent to the main educational premise, which was to evoke reverence and attachment to the Russian monarchy," notes Adam Winiarz. In 1842, the Institute was moved to Puławy and the adjective "Alexandrian" was added to its name³⁷.

Significant changes in the scope of girls' post-primary and secondary education in Poland did not come about until the second half of the 19th century, when for social and economic reasons, the problem of providing women with secondary, and then higher, education became extremely topical and required new solutions. The approach to this problem was very different, as evidenced by the examples of Austria and Russia. In the Prussian partition, the issue of secondary education for girls or that of access to higher education practically did not exist. Prussian school regulations after the Congress of Vienna did not regulate the education of Girls' youth on a secondary level almost until the outbreak of World War I. Secondary education was left to private individuals and religious institutions, and during the Kulturkampf period, many of them were subject to suppression. The national repressions in the Prussian state coincided with a very conservative view on the position of women³⁸.

It is difficult to speak about broader reform efforts in Galicia. The actions of the authorities can rather be described as a search for half-measures intended to raise the teaching level of the schools without changing the purpose of their education. The distinctiveness of girls' physical and mental characteristics and the distinctiveness of the social tasks awaiting them in the future were still clearly emphasised. This attitude on the part of the authorities was extremely sustained, although it was becoming increasingly clear that these solutions did not meet the real needs of women.

None of the existing schools corresponded to boys' gymnasiums – secondary schools that prepared them for university studies, organisationally or in terms of the curriculum. All of them were private schools, except for higher departmental schools of disputable status and teachers' schools. The schools provided vocational education at secondary level. They were an extremely successful creation, which was established as one of the elements of the reform of folk education, carried out on the scale of the entire monarchy at the turn of the 1860s and 1870s. The schools "were the first public, state girls' schools, deviating from the concept of the long-established private, lay and monastic boarding schools, generally at a low level. In Galicia, these institutes became the dominant form of education

³⁷ WINIARZ, A., *Kształcenie i wychowanie dziewcząt w Księstwie Warszawskim i Królestwie Polskim (1807–1905)*, [in:] *Kobieta i edukacja na ziemiach polskich w XIX i XX w.*, ed. A., ŻARNOWSKA, A., SZWARC, vol. 2, part 2, Warsaw 1992, p. 14–15.

³⁸ WALASEK, S., "Szkolnictwo średnie ogólnokształcące na ziemiach polskich w latach 1914–1923", *Acta Universitatis Wratislaviensis* no. 184, *Prace Pedagogiczne CXII*, Wrocław 1996, p. 22.

for girls at a post-primary level,” states Renata Dutkowa. These schools were supported by the authorities and accepted by the public, and were also used by those girls who did not intend to work as teachers, but only wanted to obtain a maturity diploma (which did not grant access to university studies)³⁹.

The establishment of private schools and scientific and educational institutions was regulated by the previously mentioned state law of 14 June 1869. Private schools could operate only under the supervision of state authorities and with the approval of the National School Council. Some of them, under certain conditions⁴⁰, could be granted the rights of state schools by the Ministry of Religion and Education. Thanks to the liberal nature of the regulations contained in the Act⁴¹, there was a rapid development of secondary education for girls. In 1896–1914, the first girls’ private secondary schools and gymnasiums were established.

The secondary school project for six-grade general education private schools was undertaken the Minister of Religion and Education, Wilhelm von Hartel, who was neither a proponent of departmental schools (like Bobrzyński) nor classic gymnasiums. The provisional statute for girls’ secondary schools was announced with a rescript of the Ministry of Religion and Education of 11 December 1900. Hartel wanted to create schools where the educational goals and curriculum would be adapted to the “special” needs and skills of women. Great emphasis was placed on modern languages, history and aesthetic studies. The curriculum included classes in pedagogy, psychology and hygiene. However, there was no Latin, and little natural sciences and mathematics. The curriculum concluded with a maturity examination, which did not give the graduates access to higher education as ordinary students.

All secondary schools were created as a result of the transformation of private academic and education institutions (boarding schools) on the departmental school level, with the exception of the Queen Jadwiga Secondary School in Lviv, which was transformed from the municipal departmental school⁴².

In 1906, the National Parliament, by virtue of an Act of April 4th, allowed the merging of departmental schools and secondary schools. “This was the end of the idea of the ‘higher departmental school,’” writes Renata Dutkowa. This idea, in social opinion, was dominated by secondary schools and two other types of schools: teachers’ schools, providing specific vocational education on the secondary level and job opportunities, as well as the

³⁹ DUTKOWA, R., *Żeńskie gimnazja*, p. 7. In 1871, the National School Council established 9 teaching schools, including three for women, in Kraków, Lviv and Przemyśl.

⁴⁰ These conditions concerned compliance with the school regulations, school authority ordinances on the use of officially approved textbooks and the implementation of the full curriculum applicable in state schools.

⁴¹ The schools could be opened by anyone who was able to secure their functioning financially and academically.

⁴² STINIA, M., *Rola społeczeństwa galicyjskiego jako organizatora średniego szkolnictwa prywatnego w okresie autonomii*, [in:] *Z dziejów polskiej kultury i oświaty od średniowiecza...*, vol. 1, p. 134; CZAJECKA, B., “Z domu w szeroki świat”: *droga kobiet do niezależności w zaborze austriackim w latach 1890–1914*, Kraków 1990, p. 100–101; CZAJECKA, B., “Szkoły klasztorne w Galicji w latach 1867–1914”, *Nasza przeszłość*, 1984, vol. 61, p. 260; DUTKOWA, R., *Żeńskie gimnazja*, p. 8; p. 13–14.

gymnasiums being created since the end of the previous century, satisfying girls' pursuit of a general secondary education and opening the path to higher education⁴³."

The secondary schools did not satisfy the ambitions of those girls who dreamt of a maturity diploma and university studies. The only way to solve this problem was to unify the boys' and girls' general education systems. In Galicia, the state stubbornly resisted the creation of state girls' secondary schools of the boys' gymnasium type, although starting in 1896, girls were permitted to sit the maturity exams, and starting in 1897, they were admitted to universities as extraordinary students. In a circular from March 24th 1897, the Ministry claimed that such schools could not be financed from the state budget, because they would only serve the middle classes, which did not meet the needs of the broad layers of the population. These decisions were mainly based on the fear of overproduction of intelligentsia by possible competition on the labour market from by women⁴⁴.

The only solution was to create private gymnasiums. The first such school was established in Krakow in 1896. These schools were created as a response to social needs, as a result of grassroots action instead of reforms carried out from above. Girls' gymnasiums, "[...] before they fully conformed to the boys' gymnasium model, underwent a years-long evolution, leading in stages to their becoming eight-grade general education institutions⁴⁵." Renata Dutkowa summarises the changes in Galician secondary education: the example of Galicia shows "how all attempts to raise the level (but not change the goal) of traditional girls' education became obsolete only as a result of many years of experience⁴⁶."

In August 1908, a decree of the Ministry of Education was issued concerning the creation of eight-grade gymnasiums, both real and transformed from secondary schools – reformed real gymnasiums. The latter taught French instead of Greek and expanded the hard and natural sciences programme. Status-wise, they were equated with classic gymnasiums⁴⁷.

The situation of girls' post-primary and secondary education in the Russian partition was different. Despite the school administration's unfavourable sentiments towards women, the Russian government – probably aware of the increasing push for higher education of women and in order to take control over girls' education, previously mainly private or religious – made concessions in the area in the late 1850s. The new tsarist policy consisted of the development of state girls' education. On the October 14th 1856, the Tsar's issued an ordinance on the creation of girls' schools in the Kingdom, similar in terms of curricula to gymnasiums, was issued. The expansion plan began to be implemented immediately.

⁴³ DUTKOWA, R., *Żeńskie gimnazja*, p. 15.

⁴⁴ Ibidem, p. 22–23.

⁴⁵ Ibidem, p. 20.

⁴⁶ Ibidem, p. 9.

⁴⁷ CZAJECKA, B., *Z domu*, p. 105–106; MIĄSO, J., op. cit., p. 129. Before World War I, there were 30 private girls' gymnasiums: 11 classic and 19 real, as well as 13 secondary schools.

After the move of the Alexandrian Institute for Unmarried Girls' Education to Puławy, until 1857, there was no state secondary school for girls in Warsaw. By a decision of the authorities, in autumn of 1857 a State Boarding School, called Maryjska, was established in Warsaw. It was very expensive and intended for daughters of nobility and state officials. Graduating it granted the students the privileges of a lower-level governess. Two years later, the six-year State Higher Girls' School was established with a fairly broad curriculum, admitting students regardless of their social background or religion. Graduating it granted the students the privileges of a senior governess. At the same time, all girls' education was handed into the care of Empress Maria Alexandrovna and Supervisory was exercised by the governor on her behalf⁴⁸. In this way, the Russian authorities initiated the development of secondary state education for girls⁴⁹. However, they were guided primarily by Russification objectives.

Wielopolski's reform in 1862 temporarily created favourable conditions for the development of private women's schools. Government education in its Russification aspect was to be reduced. Out of nine state schools, two remained: the Alexandrian-Marian Institute (created from the merger of the Alexandrian Institute and the State Boarding School) and the State Higher Girls' School. Management over the Institute was taken over by the State Commission of Religions and Public Education. The curriculum of the State Higher Girls' School was to apply in all higher girls' schools⁵⁰.

In the second half of the 1860s, there was a turn away from liberal tendencies in Russia. Soon after, there was a full return of "two trends of Paskevich's time: Russification and the desire to confine women's education within the narrowest possible limits. The aspirations of Wielopolski's era unfortunately turned out to be a short-lived episode," states Jan Hulewicz⁵¹. Government education for girls was expanded.

The act of 11 September 1864 established six-grade gymnasiums and three-four-grade pro-gymnasiums for girls. The curriculum of the girls' gymnasiums was similar to that of the classic boys' gymnasium, but without Latin or Greek. Instead, traditional handiwork was taught, with singing and gymnastics as extracurricular subjects and paid dance lessons. The schools admitted girls who were nine years of age and could read, write and count in Polish and Russian. Completing a gymnasium allowed a graduate to undertake work as a private home teacher, while after a pro-gymnasium, it was possible to proceed to grade four or five of a gymnasium. The reform aimed to unify education of women from all social levels in a spirit of loyalty to Russia. The political objectives were therefore very clear⁵².

In January 1865, a Russian gymnasium was opened in Warsaw, along with a Russian girls' pro-gymnasium and a primary school. At the beginning of 1866, further schools

⁴⁸ WINIARZ, A., *Kształcenie*, p. 15–16; POZNAŃSKI, K., *Reforma szkolna*, p. 40–41.

⁴⁹ Similar schools were later established in Lublin, Radom, Płock, Suwałki and Kalisz.

⁵⁰ POZNAŃSKI, K., *Reforma szkolna*, p. 250–252.

⁵¹ HULEWICZ, J., op. cit., p. 61.

⁵² WINIARZ, A., *Kształcenie*, p. 18–19; POZNAŃSKI, K., *Reforma szkolna*, p. 283–285; p. 309.

were opened⁵³. This trend continued in the following years, especially when Count Dmitry Tolstoy became the Minister of Education. Over the next 14 years, he reformed and expanded the education system, including girls' schools. The act of 1870 divided existing girls' schools into three-year pro-gymnasiums and seven-year gymnasiums. At the latter, an eighth grade with a pedagogical specialisation could be established. Reformed in this way, the gymnasiums provided better preparation for pedagogical work and higher education. Józef Miąso writes: "The reform work of Minister Tolstoy [...] aimed to modernise Russia by means of a school, apparently based on Western European models, but intended to strengthen the tsarist self-administration⁵⁴."

Private girls' schools prevailed in the Kingdom, but graduation did not grant access to imperial universities. These were six- or seven-grade schools, and it was only since the Duma resolution of 1912 that it became possible to open eight-grade schools⁵⁵.

Thus, differently than in Galicia, the Russian authorities initiated and established state secondary girls' schools. The aim was clear, however – it was not about answering the growing educational aspirations and needs of women, but, above all, performing political functions. It was most likely the reason why, compared to private schools, they were not very popular.

It was not until the time of the Second Republic of Poland that the situation regarding girls' education changed. The decree "On Compulsory Schooling" approved by Chief of State Józef Piłsudski on February 7th 1919, introduced compulsory schooling for all children aged 7 to 14, first in the territory of the former Russian partition, then in other lands, contributing to the unification of the general education system throughout the country. Article 118 of the March Constitution and the Act on the Education System of 11 March 1932 confirmed this state of affairs. Article 15 of this act additionally stated that "youth, who fulfil their compulsory schooling obligation but do not attend any school, are subject to compulsory supplementary education until the age of 18⁵⁶."

Comprehensive changes occurred in secondary education for girls. The 1919 "Secondary School Curriculum" was the basis of the educational reform. It announced the creation of a uniform general education eight-grade secondary school with identical curricula in girls' and boys' schools. Co-educational gymnasiums could also be established⁵⁷.

In practice, however, the girls' situation in secondary schools was more difficult than that of the boys. In the 1937/38 school year, there were 135 boys' state secondary schools,

⁵³ POZNAŃSKI, K., *Reforma szkolna*, p. 304–306.

⁵⁴ MIĄSO, J., op. cit., p. 133; p.135.

⁵⁵ WALASEK, S., op. cit., p. 19.

⁵⁶ MAUERSBERG, S., "Wykonywanie obowiązku szkolnego w niepodległej Polsce (1918–1939)", *Rozprawy z dziejów oświaty*, 1996, p. 157; p. 166–167; Idem, "Reformy szkolne w Drugiej Rzeczypospolitej (1918–1939)", *Kwartalnik Pedagogiczny*, 1995 no. 3, p. 23; MOŹDŹEŃ, S., *Teksty źródłowe do dziejów wychowania*, vol. 8: *Szkolnictwo w Polsce 1918–1945*, Kielce 1994, p. 8,17,21.

⁵⁷ SADOWSKA, J., *Ku szkole na miarę Drugiej Rzeczypospolitej: geneza, założenia i realizacja reformy Jędrzejewiczowskiej*, Białystok 2001, p. 130.

123 co-educational ones and only 49 girls' schools. The authorities were more willing to open and maintain boys' gymnasiums than girls' which meant that it was still more difficult for girls to complete a secondary education, and certainly in many cases it was more expensive, because most girls were forced to attend private schools⁵⁸.

During the Second Republic of Poland, two separate courses of education for girls and boys disappeared and the girls' secondary school gained official equal status; however, in practice, it was still more difficult for girls to achieve secondary – and consequently higher education – than it was for boys.

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⁵⁸ SAMSEL, A., "Koedukacja w szkole średniej w Polsce i na świecie w latach 1918–1939, świadomy wybór czy zło konieczne", *Przegląd Historyczno-Oświatowy*, 2004, no. 3–4, p. 84–85.

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