
MATERIALS

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Three Pedagogical Congresses

Abstract

The paper presents how important for the history of Polish education were: Ogólnopolski Zjazd Oświatowy (the All-Poland Education Convention) in Warsaw (of April 1919) – called the Teachers' Sejm, the 1st Pedagogical Congress in Poznań and the 4th Pedagogical Congress in Warsaw (of May 1939). The aforementioned convention and both congresses played a significant role in the development of educational thought and practice in interwar Poland.

The scope of the issues discussed during sessions was large. It covered issues regarding the school system and the school administration, preschool upbringing and other levels of education including higher education, vocational schools, teachers' education and teachers' pragmatics, non-school education, school and physical education hygiene. Resolutions and motions adopted at Ogólnopolski Zjazd Oświatowy (All-Poland Education Convention) in Warsaw, in April 1919, provided grounds for work on developing a democratic national education system. The main issues of the Congress in Poznań, held on 8–10 July 1929 during the General National Exhibition in Poznań, were referred to also during sessions of consecutive pedagogical congresses organised by the Polish Teachers' Union: 2nd Pedagogical Congress (in Vilnius, on 4–8 July 1931) and 3rd Pedagogical Congress (in Lvov on 17–21 June 1933).

Sessions of the aforementioned 4th Pedagogical Congress in Warsaw were held in May 1939, in special circumstances, when a threat from Hitler's Germany reached its apogee among the Polish society, including teachers. Resolutions of the 4th Congress included the programme of democratic transformations of the national education system characterised in many aspects even with an explicit social radicalism. They provided broader access to the university education for the youth from farmers' and workers' families, develop special schooling and extend the school obligation for blind, deaf, mentally disabled and "morally neglected" children, develop adult education, implement education for primary school teachers only at a university level.

Keywords: pedagogical congresses, Second Republic of Poland, school organisation, history of education

In 2009 we celebrate anniversaries important for the history of Polish education: the 90th anniversary of Ogólnopolski Zjazd Oświatowy (the All-Poland Education Convention) in Warsaw (of April 1919) – called the Teachers' Sejm, the 80th anniversary of the 1st Pedagogical

Congress in Poznan (of July 2009) and the 70th anniversary of the 4th Pedagogical Congress in Warsaw (of May 1939). The aforementioned convention and both congresses played a significant role in the development of educational thought and practice in interwar Poland.

The aforementioned Ogólnopolski Zjazd Oświatowy (All-Poland Education Convention) in Warsaw was preceded with a series of earlier all-teachers' conventions organised in the years 1917–1919: in Krakow on 23–26 August 1917, again in Krakow on 6–9 January 1918, in Piotrków on 23–25 August 1918, in Warsaw on 2–3 January 1919. During these conventions (gathering representatives of the most important teachers' organisation of Galicia and former Congress Poland), of which three were held at the end of the 1st World War, it was attempted to establish a conception of a national education system in free Poland. This task was also undertaken at Ogólnopolski Zjazd Oświatowy (the All-Poland Educational Convention) in April 1919, for which materials for works comprised projects of the Ministry of Religion and Public Education. It was assumed that after considering them by the Convention's delegates, they would be later on presented at the Legislative Sejm.

The Convention (the Teachers' Sejm) summoned by the Polish Teachers' Union (established at the aforementioned Teachers' Convention in Piotrków), was participated by over eight hundred delegates representing also teachers' unions from Silesia and Poznan, from districts that formally remained outside of the border of the resurrected Republic of Poland. Furthermore, it was attended by the representatives of state authorities led by the then Minister of Religion and Public Education – Jan Łukasiewicz. The Convention was solemnly inaugurated by a famous poet, Jan Kasprowicz (fulfilling the role of ZPTN)¹.

The scope of the issues discussed during sessions (both, plenary and sectional) was large. It covered issues regarding the school system and the school administration, preschool upbringing and other levels of education (including higher education, despite the fact that the related section was not established²), vocational schools, teachers' education and teachers' pragmatics, non-school education, school and physical education hygiene. Of course, the Convention was not free of controversies and disputes. The most disputable issue turned out to be school's denomination (especially protected by the representatives from Greater Poland). In the end, quite general and ambiguous expressions were adopted in this matter, which could be "interpreted both, in favour of opponents and supporters of a denomination school", as stated by S. Mauersberg³. It was agreed that, among others, "the national and religious-moral factors should have their due place" and that "denomination authorities control only the compliance and method of teaching religion as a subject of teaching in compliance with faith principles of a relevant denomination"⁴.

¹ See: MAUERSBERG, S., *Sejm Nauczycielski (14–17 kwietnia 1919 r.)*, *Rozprawy z Dziejów Oświaty*, 1980, vol. 23, p. 139 and others; PŁOCHA, H., *Początki odrodzonego szkolnictwa polskiego – Sejm Nauczycielski 14–17.04.1919 r.*, [in:] *Kongresy i zjazdy pedagogiczne w Polsce w XX wieku*, ed.: A. KICOWSKA, Toruń 2001, p. 21 and others; ŚWIDWIŃSKI, S., *Sejm Nauczycielski (14–17 kwietnia 1919 r.) w dziejach polskiej demokracji oświatowej*, *Przegląd Historyczno-Oświatowy*, 1947, no. 3–4, p. 32 and next.

² MAUERSBERG, S., *Sejm Nauczycielski...*, p. 143.

³ *Ibidem*, p. 149.

⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 149.

The most important decisions of the Convention included, among others, stating that the primary school should be consolidated and should last seven years. Therefore, it was decided that the least organised school would be a two-form school with at least two teachers. Despite the fact that the agreed position regarding the secondary school system was not presented in the final theses, the majority was for the five-year secondary school. During sessions, a lot of time was devoted to the issue of didactic grounds (subjects stipulating the direction and aims of education in particular types of schools). It was unanimously underlined that among subjects included therein, the main role should be played by: Polish, history and geography. Furthermore, the idea of primary schools teachers' education at 2-year pedagogical studies (of a vocational university's character) on the grounds of the full secondary school curriculum was supported, and at the same time, a transitional form of six-year teachers' college based on full, seven-form primary school giving graduates the right to start university studies, was accepted.

Moreover, during the Convention, the importance of non-school education in the national education system was underlined and basing it on a large social initiative was supported. It was agreed that the state should predominantly support social institutions in order to "improve the educational work to a higher level of technique"⁵.

Resolutions and motions adopted at Ogólnopolski Zjazd Oświatowy (All-Poland Education Convention) in Warsaw, in April 1919, which in many cases were compromises, of course were not binding. Nevertheless, they provided grounds for work on developing a democratic national education system. The organisational level of primary schools in rural areas was improved with significant difficulties, and as a result, throughout the interwar period a large group of pupils in this environment continued to attend a school with one teacher. Despite the fact that the secondary school curriculum was consequently modified according to the plan outlined at the Convention by Tadeusz Łopuszański, until the Janusz Jędrzejewicz's reform an eight-form lower secondary school remained an obligatory type of a secondary school⁶.

No all postulates of the Teachers' Sejm were implemented and many of them remained valid until the end of the interwar period. Later on, they were supplemented and modified, and set a direction of struggles in the educational area for the most orthodox democratic social and educational environments, also including teachers and educational theorists aimed at fundamental reforms in the field of education.

Many issues discussed during sessions of the Teachers' Sejm were later referred to during another pedagogical congresses. For example, the issue of the Polish school's educational programme also discussed by the delegates of Ogólnopolski Zjazd Nauczycielski (the All-Poland Teachers' Convention) of April 1919, comprised the main topic of the aforementioned Pedagogical Congress in Poznań. This Congress was held on 8–10 July 1929 during the General National Exhibition in Poznań (organised on the tenth anniversary of regaining independence by Poland).

⁵ As cited in: SUTYŁA, J., *Miejsce kształcenia dorosłych w systemie oświatowym II Rzeczypospolitej*, Wrocław 1982, p. 37.

⁶ See more: MAUERSBERG, S., *Sejm Nauczycielski...*, p. 154–155.

The Pedagogical Congress in Poznan was summoned by two teachers' organisations: the Union of Polish Teachers of Elementary Schools and the Trade Union of Teachers of Polish High Schools. Approximately 2,000 persons arrived at the Congress⁷. Apart from teaching activists and representatives of both unions, it was attended by the representatives of public authorities (with the Minister of Religion and Public Education, Sławomir Czerwiński) and self-government authorities, representatives of the world of science (including, among others, the founder of Polish social pedagogy, Helena Radlińska) and delegates of related foreign teachers' organisations. The Congress was one of 140 congresses and conventions organised on the occasion of the Polish General Exhibition (together with, among others, the Pan-Slavic Congress of Singers), Wszechsłowiński Zlot Sokołów (the Pan-Slavic Congress of Falcons), Wszechsłowiński Zjazd Medyków (the Pan-Slavic Congress of Medics), Zjazd Straży Pożarnych (the Fire Brigades' Convention), Zjazd Młodych Polek (the Young Polish Women's Convention), Zlot Harcerstwa (the Jamboree of Polish Scouting), the Catholic Congress⁸. Participants of the Pedagogical Congress could also see an educational exposition being a part of the Polish General Exhibition and presented in several rooms⁹.

The speech given by the Minister of Religion and Public Education, Sławomir Czerwiński entitled *For the educational ideal of the Polish school (O ideal wychowawczy szkoły polskiej)* had a fundamental meaning for the subjective part of Congress' sessions in Poznan. In a way, this speech closed the hitherto phase of establishing assumptions and practising citizenship education in pre-war Poland, the education experiencing a characteristic shift in the direction of state upbringing after Józef Piłsudski's coup in May¹⁰. In this exact speech, the then ruling camp's conception of state education was presented in general terms, which was later on developed and popularised by the successor of S. Czerwiński – Janusz Jędrzejewicz, Jerzy Ostrowski, Hanna Pohoska, Adam Skwarczyński. While presenting a new upbringing ideal in Poznan, S. Czerwiński stipulated a psychological type that should be formed within upbringing actions. It was a model citizen, “a fighter – employee”: disciplined, loyal, hard-working, joining the ability of a positivist activity and working with romantic enthusiasm for the state and performed civil duties¹¹.

⁷ *Kongres Pedagogiczny w Poznaniu, Głos Nauczycielski*, 1929, no. 26, p. 393; See also: MOSKALIK, U., *Kongres poznański w cieniu Powszechnej Wystawy Krajowej w 1929 r.*, [in:] *Kongresy i zjazdy*, p. 72–79.

⁸ See: WASCHKO, S., *Kongresy i zjazdy*, [in:] *Powszechna Wystawa Krajowa w Poznaniu w roku 1929*, vol. 2, elaboration under the guidance of: S. WACHOWIAK, Poznań 1930, p. 337–355.

⁹ See: BUDZYŃSKA, J., *Z wystawy poznańskiej. Dział organizacji szkolnictwa na PWK, Praca Szkolna*, 1929, no. 8, p. 239–245.

¹⁰ See more regarding this topic in: ARASZKIEWICZ, F.W., *Ideale wychowawcze Drugiej Rzeczypospolitej*, Warsaw 1978; BARTNICKA, K., *Wychowanie państwowe, Rozprawy z Dziejów Oświaty*, 1972, vol. 15; JAKUBIAK, K., *Wychowanie państwowe jako ideologia wychowawcza sanacji*, Bydgoszcz 1994; JAKUBIAK, K., JAMROŹEK, W., *Idea wychowania obywatelskiego w polskiej nowożytnej myśli pedagogicznej do 1939 r.*, [in:] *Historyczne konteksty edukacji obywatelskiej w społeczeństwach wielokulturowych*, ed.: A. SZERLAŁ, Kraków 2007.

¹¹ *Kongres Pedagogiczny w Poznaniu, Głos Nauczycielski*, 1929, no. 26, p. 395–397; See also: CZERWIŃSKI, S., *O nowy ideal wychowawczy*, Warsaw 1932, p. 20–44.

The upbringing ideal outlined by S. Czerwiński was specified and “translated” into a language of educational practice in the consecutive speeches of the Congress’ participants¹². In the opinion of Łódź education theorist, Halina Gajadmowicz, the contents’ analysis of the discussion held at the Congress in Poznan proves that it was based on “solid scientific grounds” and met “the ideology of Polish state resurrecting as a sovereignty”, that “the main ideas motivating the Polish statehood were considered in the educational ideal of a school, which later on were used to stipulate more specific objectives, which in contemporary pedagogical teleology are called operational objectives”¹³. What was characteristic, was that the teleological issues were presented in a broader context proposed at the educational reform congress (based on the principle of a consolidated school promoted by both teachers’ unions). At the same time, the referred researcher underlines that such a new and broad understanding of the educational aims distinguishing the contents of speeches at the 1st Pedagogical Congress “reached an apogee in the sent paper by Florian Znaniecki, a prominent Polish sociologist, famous and renowned by science on a global scale. In the paper, he underlined the necessity to go beyond the framework of a school institution and prepare children and youth to self-education and adults to continuous education”¹⁴.

The main issues of the Congress in Poznan were referred to also during sessions of consecutive pedagogical congresses organised by the Polish Teachers’ Union: 2nd Pedagogical Congress (in Vilnius, on 4–8 July 1931) and 3rd Pedagogical Congress (in Lvov on 17–21 June 1933).

Sessions of the aforementioned 4th Pedagogical Congress in Warsaw were held in May 1939, in special circumstances, when a threat from Hitler’s Germany reached its apogee among the Polish society, including teachers. It was also reflected in the inauguration speech by the President of the Polish Teachers’ Union, Zygmunt Nowicki. “The Pedagogical Congress summoned by the Polish Teachers’ Union, said Z. Nowicki in his inauguration speech, expresses a great solidarity with whole nation in the matters regarding protection of Polish borders and with whole nation joins the Minister Beck’s exclamation: “We will not be pushed away from the sea””. After these words, the gathered stood up while repeating that exclamation and then, started singing *The Oath (Rota)*¹⁵. It should be also underlined that the Congress was also held in the period of an increase in critical mood among teachers, also among the Polish Teachers’ Union, not satisfied with the educational policy implemented in Poland. It was also reflected in the speech given by Z. Nowicki. The President of the Polish Teachers’ Union said, among others: “We did a lot. However, it should be openly stated that what we did was outside of the scope of normal human strength, outside of the boundaries within which our profession is obliged and can function, without perfect workplace, at the edge of a modern school. The school reform in Poland was indeed implement-

¹² GAJDAMOWICZ, H., *Cele wychowania na kongresach i zjazdach pedagogicznych w II Rzeczypospolitej*, [in:] *Kongresy i zjazdy*, p. 32.

¹³ Ibidem, p. 33.

¹⁴ Ibidem, p. 33.

¹⁵ *Program ideowy Kongresu, Głos Nauczycielski*, 1939, no. 36, p. 809.

ed, but not completed! We do not have a seven-form, primary school, grounds for a consolidated school system... The underdeveloped school system, not sociologically instilled in the country's body leads to activating a selective mechanism protecting educational interests of elite groups, however, with regard to the lower classes, especially the farmer one, it establishes a form of educational policy that is applied with regard to the citizens of the second class, a form closing poorer people within their low culture!"¹⁶.

During three-day sessions (attended by 1,500 persons), in total 30 papers were presented, half of which were prepared, as stated by Stanisław Michalski, "by scientific employees and prominent specialists in pedagogical field" related with then left wing society and intelligence that was radical with regard to the social aspect. According to the same researcher, the main role was played by the following papers: *Upbringing and the social structure of Poland (Wychowanie a struktura społeczna Polski)* by J. Chałasiński, *The role of upbringing in social restructuring (Rola wychowania w przebudowie społecznej)* by H. Radlińska, *Guidelines of a democratic education system (Wytyczne demokratycznego ustroju oświaty)* by A. B. Dobrowolski, *Teachers' co-participation in developing education system in the state (Współdziałanie nauczycielstwa w tworzeniu systemu wychowawczego w państwie)* by Z. Mysłakowski, *The role of teachers' union movement in school system development (Rola zrzeszeniowego ruchu nauczycieli w rozwoju szkolnictwa)* by J. Kolanko, *The psychological factor in drawing up curricula (Czynnik psychologiczny w budowie programów)* by S. Baleya and *The social role of science (Rola społeczna nauki)* by S. Kalinowski¹⁷. The aforementioned researcher of the history of education states: "Despite the fact that programme papers and plenary discussions were not free of controversies, the Congress' resolutions constituted an expression of educational democracy's win"¹⁸.

Resolutions of the 4th Pedagogical Congress began with the statement that "the main aim of upbringing must constitute developing an attitude, a full readiness to protect the state and to multiply its achievements in all fields". A characteristic atmosphere accompanying the sessions and resulting from the feeling of increasing threat from Hitler's Germany was present in other fragments of passed resolutions. For example, it was underlined that "due to our present international situation that can be sooner or later threatened with an outbreak of the war and believing that a Polish child that is the future and wealth of the Nation should be taken care of in all situations...". Thus, the Congress called on "all teachers of all types of schools to properly prepare for the purposes of duly organising care over a child during the times of war"¹⁹.

A lot of place in the Warsaw Congress' resolutions is devoted to the upbringing aims. With this regard, the contents in this scope still referred to the upbringing ideal promoted at previous congresses, yet, they were supplemented, probably under the influence of the idea evolution characteristic for then the biggest teachers' organisation, with distinct social ac-

¹⁶ Ibidem, p. 810–811.

¹⁷ MICHALSKI, S., *Koncepcje systemu edukacji w II Rzeczypospolitej*, Warsaw 1988, p. 122–123.

¹⁸ Ibidem, p. 123.

¹⁹ "Uchwały IV Kongresu Pedagogicznego", *Głos Nauczycielski*, 1939, no. 37, p. 851.

cents. It was stated therein, among others: “The 4th Pedagogical Congress believes that the upbringing work should be aimed at upbringing a full human – a citizen, a fighter and an employee characterised with activeness, independence of thinking, civil courage and high level of social orientation expressed in internal discipline and dedicated work for the native social level, for their nation and state.” At the same time, it was stated that “a path to the effective implementation of upbringing ideals comprises, above all, popularising cultural achievements and allowing as large sections of society as possible to participate in development thereof”²⁰.

A change of sociocultural contents of school was demanded at the congress, which was also strongly influenced by the contents of the speech enthusiastically received by the participants, given by Józef Chałasiński²¹ a renowned sociologist, ideologically close to the then people’s movement. As a consequence, as stated in the resolutions “a larger consideration of the role of working sections of the society, their needs and interests in the upbringing” was demanded, among others, by a necessary “transformation of curricula of schools of all levels and revision of course books in order to include the history of work and achievements of farmers and workers in the development of the Polish nation and its culture”²².

Resolutions of the 4th Congress included the programme of democratic transformations of the national education system characterised in many aspects even with an explicit social radicalism. Apart from the aforementioned issue of changing sociocultural contents of the school, it was demanded that the grounds for the whole school system comprised “at least a 7-year primary school preceded by a widespread preschool. Furthermore, it was demanded to “implement a rational decentralisation of schools of all types and levels with a consideration of regional and environmental features”, eliminate less organised schools, increase the number of public secondary schools, develop a scholarship fund for exceptionally talented yet poor students of secondary schools and universities, develop professional counselling in the school system, “maintain co-educational character of primary schools”, provide broader access to the university education for the youth from farmers’ and workers’ families, develop special schooling and extend the school obligation for blind, deaf, mentally disabled and “morally neglected” children, develop adult education, implement education for primary school teachers only at a university level²³.

By referring to the educational programme of the Teachers’ Sejm from twenty years ago, the Pedagogical Congress constituted a kind of “a clasp” closing, in fact, a long period of efforts made by teachers’ and related theorists (working with the educational issues) with regard to democratic changes in the education in interwar Poland. The outbreak of the war and then, years of German and Soviet occupation hindered potential attempts of implementing the 4th Congress’ resolutions.

²⁰ Ibidem, p. 851.

²¹ “Wychowanie a struktura społeczna Polski”, *Głos Nauczycielski*, 1939, no. 36, p. 814–815.

²² “Uchwały IV Kongresu...”, p. 851.

²³ Ibidem, p. 851–854.

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