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Assumptions for of arts subjects classes in Polish general education in the interwar period

The subject matter of the dissertation includes the assumptions underlying the implementation of classes in arts - drawing, singing and manual works¹ - in Polish general education in the interwar years. What speaks for the conduction of the research located in the field of history, within the qualitative research strategy is the fact, that scientific publications to date lack an elaboration on drawing, singing and manual works as group of classes devoted to developing the artistic creativity of students. Also, the issue of teaching these particular subjects has so far been of interest to only a few researchers.

The dissertation assumed a chronological-problem arrangement. The chronological boundaries start in 1918 and end in outbreak of World War II.

The research was enabled by the analysis of printed sources, textbooks, studies and specialized magazines. Among the printed sources of general nature, the following were of importance: the Official Journal of the Ministry of Religious Denominations and Public Education, printed curricula and ordinances and normative-legal acts on the organizational changes in education.

The work is structured in five chapters. The first chapter is devoted to the socio-political contexts of the education of the interwar period. It presents the most important factors enabling the revival of education after the period of partitioning and the organizational structure of the general education system up to and after 1932. Separate subsections deal with the educational thought of the national camp and the educational ideals of the Sanation movement.

The second chapter of the dissertation is dedicated to the review of contents contained in the curricula of arts subjects for public schools that were in force in 1918-1932 and in the period following the 1932 reform, up and until the outbreak of World War II.

¹ For a more comprehensive approach to the issue, all subjects were included in the thesis, which in addition to crafts were included in the scope of the so-called practical classes; namely: classes for female students, and classes in everyday culture, horticulture, household, economy and farming.

The next chapter discusses the issue of methodical literature for classes in drawing, singing and music, as well as crafts classes.

The fourth chapter contains an overview of teaching methods for drawing, singing and crafts, using the issues of statics and didactic dynamism, as introduced in the interwar period to Polish didactic thought by Kazimierz Sośnicki.

The whole is summarized by an attempt at showing the place of arts and crafts classes in the system primary school teacher education. The research includes, in particular, curricula for preparatory schools, teacher colleges, State Teacher Courses, educator colleges and pedagogical high schools, as well as for Higher Teacher Training Courses.

The research carried out demonstrated that drawing, singing and crafts occupied a significant and permanent place in the programs of public schools throughout the entire twenty-year period. These subjects were treated as a group of artistic subjects, complementing each other at various levels of didactic work. The essence of teaching artistic subjects was to educate the senses, form an introduction in the world of aesthetic beauty and Polish culture, equipping students with technical and practical skills that can be used in everyday life.

The curricula, both in their teaching contents and methodological guidelines, contained elements characteristic for educational thought of the political camps that exercised educational powers at a given time. The ideals of state education promoted by the Sanation movement were particularly marked.

Traditional methods predominated, based on the observation and reproduction of the models given by the teacher. Methods derived from the current of new education, emphasizing the cognitive role of artistic objects and the importance of free creation for natural development were marginalized.

Our analysis of methodical literature demonstrated that the majority of the textbooks used were of an extremely practical nature; they provided the teachers with ready-made and accessible material, usually provided with a sparing theoretical commentary. The traditional methods prevailed in the literature on the subject. What should be noted is the significant impact of S. Szuman's research on authors' attitudes towards the child's drawing development stages. What becomes apparent are the significant shortcomings in literature concerning crafts subjects, especially classes for female students, and classes in everyday culture, horticulture, household, economy and farming.

The preparation of teachers of arts subjects for primary schools differed in scope depending on the institution or course. Nevertheless the general level of preparation rarely went beyond the material and methodology foreseen for a seven-grade primary school.

Teaching drawing, singing and crafts grouped together as arts subjects has not been the subject of research to date. Our attempt at demonstrating the assumptions that formed the foundation of these subjects at the general education level in the interwar period accounted some difficulties related mainly to the scarce subject literature, and lack of availability of some of the textbooks, particularly in the field of crafts. Despite these difficulties, the author expresses the hope that the dissertation forms a valuable contribution to the overall research on the history of education.

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