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The Transformation Process in Preschool Education in Łódź after 1918 in the Light of Archival Materials

KEYWORDS

preschool education in Łódź, preschool institutions of various denominations, archive research, education in Łódź after 1918, Government of the city of Łódź

ABSTRACT

The purpose of the research described in this work was to show the transformations of preschool education in Łódź after Poland had regained independence in 1918. The research was focused on the issue of organising preschool education by the local government of Łódź when the only institutions for preschool children in Łódź included social shelters run by charitable organizations, parishes, communities of various denominations, and private individuals. Other issues included the stimuli and circumstances which decided about the organization of the first and subsequent twelve municipal kindergartens in Łódź. The research was based on source materials kept in the National Archive in Łódź (mainly the documents of the Department of Education and Culture of the Local Government of Łódź).

As a result, it was concluded that in 1922 the government started pedagogical supervision of approximately 15 community kindergartens, and the inspection of their operation revealed many oversights. That issue became the main reason for the action taken by the Łódź local government aimed at opening municipal preschool institutions. The research has led to the conclusion that the transformations which could be observed in preschool education after 1918 include, most of all, an attempt to standardize the pedagogical aspects of the operation of community shelters with different statuses, and to increase the level of education through regular supervision and methodological improvement, as well as starting a network of kindergartens in the city by opening the first municipal kindergarten in 1924.

Introduction

Once Poland regained its independence in 1918, new ideas and demands for education, upbringing and children care, which had been formulated by the theorists and care practitioners during the First World War, were widely discussed in the society and could be embedded in the newly created educational policy of the new state. In April 1919, during a few days' national congress called the Teachers' Council (Mauersberg 1980: 139-145; Jamrożek 2009: 133-135), the representatives of the teachers' organisations, educational activists and state authorities attempted to work out the national education system.

Another subject discussed during that congress included the issues related to preschool education, which were brought up by the newly created Preschool Education Section (Section II) (Bobrowska-Nowak 1978: 256-257). Again, during the congress – since these demands were previously brought up in 1917 and 1918 (Wróbel 1967: 26; Miąso 1980: 99)¹ – the meaning of preschools and nurseries was emphasised in the concept of the three-stage educational system and the seven grade elementary school, as the participants wanted them to be connected with the school, so that they have the status of the establishments preparing children for school education. Also, the participants of the congress wanted the policy of public education, which was implemented by law in February 1919, to include shelters for children (it concerned children of the last two classes before reaching the age of 7) (*O polską szkołę* 1920: 237). Although these and other postulates (Bobrowska-Nowak 1978: 258)² were commonly accepted by the Teachers' Council, and became the basis for the changes in the preschool education in Poland, in the independent state not all of them were fully understood and accepted in terms of law, administration and organisation, and some of them, up until the end of the interwar period, remained only declarations. It could be assumed that the issues related to the political and social system of the state, such as the implementation of the legal – administrative system and the currency system, forming borders and partial reconstruction of the economy after the war, and, in terms of education, creating the basics of the primary and secondary education, were more crucial than taking care of the conscious education of a child in the preschool age.

Maria Weryho-Radziwiłłowiczowa, a pedagogue and a writer, one of the first activists of the preschool education in Poland, was aware of the low priority given to the preschool education in the education system at that time, and in her magazine,³ which

¹ During two congresses organised by the teachers in 1917 and 1918 in Krakow, the basic functions of the preschools and nurseries were set, highlighting their responsibility of providing care, but also cultural and educational objectives which are crucial in preparing children for primary education.

² The Preschool Education Section raised eight requests then.

³ The magazine *Wychowanie Przedszkolne* [Preschool Education] published in 1925-1939.

was created for kindergarten teachers, she said that the preschool care is like “the Cinderella of education” and “the society takes care of the schools, but less attention is paid to preschool education” (*Słowo wstępne* 1925: 1). However, the administrative authorities did take up some initiatives to improve preschool education because the Ministry of Religious Denominations and Public Enlightenment appointed a special Department of Preschool Education (Wróbel 1967: 42-43),⁴ which standardized many issues related to early childhood education by 1926. Nevertheless, the general expectation of the educational authorities was to standardize the legislation enabling the creation of a network of the professional early childhood education units across the entire country.

Local councils took active part in the development of the educational system, especially in the first years after regaining independence by Poland. First of all – they followed the central authorities’ guidelines; second – they knew the needs and requirements of the local society. Soon after regaining the independence, the Polish government issued the *Decree on the elections to Municipal Councils in the former Congress Kingdom of Poland* of 13th December 1918, and, two months later, the Decree on the municipal government of 4th February 1919 (*Księga pamiątkowa* 1930: 27; Wasiak 1980: 55). The latter document regulated the basic rights and obligations of the voters and the government, defined competences and ways of managing municipal council and also the rights and obligations of councillors. It determined the internal structure and role of the municipality, but at the same time, it implemented the supervision of the state administration over towns (Wasiak 1980: 58).⁵ Tasks aiming at the development of education and culture (running or subsidising related institutions), protecting public health or providing social care to residents in the area, were included in the competencies of the municipal associations.⁶ It could also be assumed that in the bigger agglomerations, such as Łódź, the development of broadly understood education, similarly to other areas of social life, was associated with the establishment and functioning of the local government, administrative decisions, and above all, its finances.

⁴ M. Weryho-Radziwiłłowiczowa was appointed as the director of the department. Its main tasks included: re-organising and standardising organisational structures of the existing establishments, implementation of the standardised programs and methods of pedagogical work in the nurseries, ensuring qualified teachers available in the existing and new educational establishments. However, the activity of the department only covered central Poland.

⁵ The rights of local governments specified in the decrees issued in 1918-1919 were gradually limited to the benefit of the state administration. Its supervision over the local government was regulated in 1928 and reinforced in 1933. According to J. Wasiak, the division of competences between the local government and state administration was the subject of discussions during the interwar period, and starting from 1930s of the 20th century, the state administration was always right.

⁶ Other – the local government’s “own” responsibilities included: managing the property of the commune, creating and maintaining roads, bridges and means of communication, supply of materials and supporting the local industry, craft and trade.

The newly elected (in 1919) local government of Łódź did not take into account the concerns related to preschool education – they were not classified as a priority then, and even more – the supervision over the existing public nurseries (the government did not have any on their own) was passed to the Municipal Charity Department in Łódź and special Social Care Committee, not to the Education Department responsible for the field of education.⁷ At that time, the main priorities of the local government included elimination of illiteracy, promoting reading books and development of libraries, and primarily – in the town that was mainly inhabited by poorly educated working people (Rzepakowski 2008: 103-104)⁸ – public education for children aged 7-14 (Nartonowicz-Kot 1985: 6). It is worth mentioning that the local government in Łódź was the first government in the country that began implementing such projects, and after only a few years they were successful (Smolik 1929:4). The major step in the areas of upbringing and education of preschool children was made in Łódź in the middle of 1920s, because that is when the first preschool establishment was opened there, as a result of which a new educational direction was set in the city. Up until that time, precisely to 1924, the local government, as it was already mentioned, did not own any nurseries, and the only way the local government was caring for preschool children was by subsidising Christian and Jewish nurseries⁹ which belonged to various charitable organisations maintained by people of different beliefs and nationalities.¹⁰ The changes concerning early education, which were implemented within the next few years in Łódź, must have been quite significant and noticed by

⁷ New local authorities, along with the president Aleksy Rzewski, began operating in this field by establishing a list of social institutions supporting children (nurseries, orphanages, shelter houses, etc.) functioning in the city and financially supported since the First World War. The representatives of the Department of Education and Culture informed the local government that “no social care establishments are subsidized,” and shelters for children are treated as care facilities. Archiwum Państwowe w Łodzi [National Archive in Łódź] (APŁ), Akta miasta Łodzi [Files of the city of Łódź] (AmŁ), Wydział Oświaty i Kultury [Department of Education and Culture] (WOiK), sign.16837: Caring for Children 1917-1921, card (k.) Excerpt (3rd) from the Local Government meeting in Łódź on 16.07.1919; k. 6-7 Letter of the Department of Education addressed to the Social Care Committee of the Public Charity Department of 24.07.1919.

⁸ According to the data from the register of 1921, the inhabitants of Łódź were poorly educated: only 0.8% of them were university graduates, 0.7% completed secondary and vocational schools, 46.6% completed elementary schools, 14.7% were educated at home, and 20% of them were illiterate.

⁹ In 1922, 30 social nurseries, childcare establishments and institutions such as orphanages, shelters, and educational homes for preschool children were financially supported by the Department of Social Care (previously known as the Department of Public Charity). APŁ, AmŁ, Wydział Opieki Społecznej [Department of Social Care] (WOS), sign. 570: Instytucje dobroczynne [Charitable institutions] 1922-1923, k. 23-24.

¹⁰ In 1921, the population of Łódź was 451.974 and it mainly included Polish people (61.9%), therefore Roman Catholics; the second largest population were the Jews (30.7%), then Germans (7.0%), i.e. mainly evangelical Christians. Other nations constituted an insignificant percentage (0.3%) of the population.

others, as Zofia Żukiewiczowa, the head of Preschool Education Department of the Local Government of Warsaw, while referring to the 15th anniversary of the foundation of preschool establishments in Poland, wrote in the magazine called *Przedszkole* [Kindergarten], that the local government of Łódź is one of the leading governments in Poland in implementing the crucial demands concerning early education (other leading local governments included those of Warsaw and Lviv, and two “powiat” [district] governments – in Częstochowa and Będzin) (Żukiewiczowa 1933/34: 39; Żukiewiczowa 1934/35: 45-46).

From the point of view of the research on preschool education in Łódź in the interwar period, a significant element and, at the same time, a research question includes the issue of organising preschool education in Łódź after 1918, the attitude of the local government towards administrative bodies running the social establishments, the quality of preschool education in those establishments, the communication with the administration and kindergarten teachers, and, finally, the reasons why the first kindergarten, and then – 12 more municipal kindergartens – were opened in Łódź. The answers to these and other questions can be found in the archival materials stored in the National Archive in Łódź. Based on the documents mainly included in the collection called “Files of the City of Łódź – Department of Education and Culture,” the author of this paper has attempted to show the series of changes that took place in the preschool education in Łódź after Poland regained independence (Szczepańska 2000: 116-129; Sosnowska 2013: 66-79; Sosnowska 2014: 281-306; Sosnowska 2016: 281-297).

Preschool education institutions in Łódź shortly before regaining independence

Up until 1918, the care for preschool children in Łódź was relying on the social sector: philanthropic, charitable and other private institutions (Sosnowska 2017: 95, table 7). Łódź was a multi-ethnic city, therefore establishments such as kindergartens and nurseries¹¹ were operated – as it was already mentioned – by charities, churches, parishes, factories, associations and communities of different denominations. On the threshold of 1919, there were 30 kindergartens/nurseries operating in Łódź. They belonged to the social sector and were attended by the children aged 3-4 to 6-8 years

¹¹ In the archival materials, the terms “kindergartens” and “nurseries” are interchangeable. It happened, that in the documentation regarding the private and social kindergarten one can find reference about children older than seven years old, and in orphanages – children younger than three years old. APŁ, AmŁ, WOS, sign. 18519: Sprawozdania Łódzkiej Miejscowej Rady Opiekuńczej [Reports Łódź Local Welfare Council] 1917, pp. 23-435.

old. It is worth mentioning that this type of institutions was mainly focused on the caring-upbringing aspect, with the emphasis on care [Jewish kindergartens were the exceptions (Sosnowska 2017: 395-396, 400, 402-406, 430-432)]. They provided children with warm meals and made it possible for them to stay in the nursery for a few-hours, while their parents were at work. Also, depending on the financial situation of each institution – they provided the children with clothing and footwear.

In the light of the data from the Statistical Department of the Municipality of Łódź gathered at the beginning of 1918, the number of children aged under seven years old was 44.693 girls and boys (13.1% of the population of Łódź) (Goerne 1919: 27, table 3), and the number of children attending the kindergartens was around 5.105 children (table 1), which makes it possible for us to conclude that the kindergartens existing in Łódź could not satisfy the huge needs of this area resulting from the fact that most inhabitants of the city were working class people who needed everyday care for their children.

Table 1. Children in kindergartens in Łódź in January 1918

Kindergartens according to the religious beliefs of children	Number of children			Average number of children attending kindergartens per 1000 inhabitants of a given belief
	Girls	Boys	Total	
Roman-Catholic	1479	1482	2961	18
Evangelical (and other Christian beliefs)	469	429	891	21
Jewish	1045	188	1253	9
Total	2989	2099	5105	15

Source: Goerne 1919: 41, table 6.

Once the new local government was formed, the care for children staying at the social kindergartens was passed, as previously mentioned, to one of the municipal departments – precisely, the Department of Public Charity (from 1921 it was the Department of Social Care). Their representatives, absorbed with the tasks related to providing the essential social care to the inhabitants after the devastating war (such as feeding, fuel supply, looking for accommodation, placing in shelter homes), neither addressed the issues of the preschool education, nor even monitored the activities of the social kindergartens. Their role was limited to providing monthly financial

subsidies, mainly for feeding children in these institutions. At the beginning of 1922, 20 institutions with the status of a kindergarten/shelter for children aged 4-7 (table 2) were subsidized.

Table 2. Social kindergartens/shelters subsidised by the Municipal Office of Łódź in 1922

	Kindergartens/shelters	Address (street)	Establishment status
For Christian children (Roman Catholic, Mariavite and Evangelical communities)	Three nurseries of the Christian Charity Society in Łódź	Smugowa 6 Karola 16 Wysoka 28	Charitable organisation
	Two kindergartens of St. Stanislaw Kostka Shelter Society (including deaf-mute children)	Czerwona 6	Parish establishment
	Nursery in the Church of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary	Drewnowska 72	Parish establishment
	Two kindergartens in St. Joseph Parish	Długa 17 Pomorska 79	
	Fr. Karol Szmidl Shelter in the Church of the Holy Cross	Milsza (Kopernika) 43	Parish establishment
	Three kindergartens/shelters in the Mariavite churches	Franciszkańska 29 Podleśna 22 Nawrot 104	Parish establishment
	A shelter in the Evangelical Church of Saint John	Sienkiewicza 60	Parish establishment
For Jewish children	Nursery (shelter)	Smugowa 4	Charitable organisation
	People's nursery	Sienkiewicza 22	Private
	Nursery by the People's School	Cegielniana 17	Private
	Kindergarten "Herclija"	Cegielniana 75	Of the Zionist Committee
	Nursery "Ezras Ilmim" for deaf-mute children	Zielona 23	Private
	Kindergarten by the B. Borochof School	Cegielniana 28	Private

Source: APŁ, AmŁ, WOS, 1922-1923: k. 23-24.

It is worth noting that in 1920, the local government published the article concerning preschool education. Jan Szmurło, a doctor from Warsaw, published an extensive article in *Dziennik Zarządu Miasta Łodzi* [The Daily of the Government of the City of Łódź] published by the press department of the local government, in which he described the history of kindergartens, while explaining how these type of institutions were operating in Warsaw (the Department of Education in Warsaw was operating 53 nurseries with 136 kindergarten groups and the same number of teachers) (Szmurło 1920a: 7-12; Szmurło 1920b: 5-11). The author pointed out the necessity of providing children with safe and hygienic environment, raised the issue of training the personnel in the theoretical and practical pedagogical knowledge, and discussed the issue of specifying an educational and upbringing curriculum for these institutions. Doctor Szmurło outlined the specific tasks for the local government, such as: “Creating shelters for children, which conform to the specific hygienic standards, and supplying them with necessary items such as towels, soap and good quality food, is one of the main responsibilities of the local government” (Szmurło 1920b: 8-9).¹² He was convincing the readers that the local government should also support the local initiatives in implementation of new education methods supporting children’s development – both physical and moral

The fact that the local government changed its way of thinking about upbringing preschool children was confirmed by opening (in March 1921) the Department of Education and Culture of the Łódź Government (former Department of Schooling) which took over the issues related to kindergartens that were previously managed by the Department of Public Charity. The new department was split into three branches: The Schooling Branch, The Branch of Compulsory Schooling, and the Branch of Culture and Non-school Education. The Schooling Branch was responsible for taking care of the kindergartens’ affairs in Łódź (Sosnowska 2013). At the beginning of 1922, after Stefan Kopciński, the chairman of the municipal Department of Education and Culture (WOiK), received unofficial information, followed by the formal complaints, about the activity of social kindergartens in Łódź, a radical changes were made in the educational policy of the government of the city. The Department of Public Education of the Ministry of Religious Denominations and Public Enlightenment, which also received such information, sent the following letter on 2nd February 1922: “The Ministry of Religious Denominations and Public Enlightenment is sending, in the attachment, the report summarising the audits of the kindergartens in Łódź, so that they can be taken into consideration when organising and supervising the work of nurseries and shelters for children” (APŁ, AmŁ, WOiK, 1922-1925: k. 5; *Pismo Departamentu* [Letter of the Department] 1922). Since the “attachment”

¹² The original quotes were used in the Polish text.

contained negative views about the kindergartens in Łódź, even though they were not managed by the local government, but operating within its boundaries, the decision was made to improve the situation.

Prior to that, Maria Wernikówna, asked by the Department of Preschool Education in the Ministry of Religious Denominations and Public Enlightenment (Polish abbreviation: MWRiOP), came to Łódź to audit local kindergartens and shelters in November and December 1921 (28.11.-18.12.) (APŁ, AmŁ, WOiK, 1922-1925: k. 7-12; *Sprawozdanie z wizytacji ochronek m. Łodzi* [Report from the audit in the shelters of Łódź] 1921).¹³ She visited 43 institutions, including 17 with the status of a kindergarten/shelter for “non-resident children.” In the audit summary, M. Wernikówna was giving the information about the condition of the institutions for children in Łódź, and this report was later analysed by the education authorities in Warsaw and Łódź. The summary was rather negative, as she wrote that “all kindergartens are in a bad financial situation, which has a terrible impact on the way they are managed” (*Sprawozdanie z wizytacji ochronek m. Łodzi* 1921). The units running the kindergartens “give incredibly low salaries to the teachers” because of the limited financial resources, which, in turn, results in employing people without proper qualifications. Public kindergartens had another drawback which was the lack of educational resources required to conduct classes and, on the other hand, the ways of working with children were limited to talks and playing “conducted without understanding.” These establishments also had a low educational level. The auditor highlighted a few kindergartens which, in her opinion, were “managed properly, in accordance with their objective.” They included three kindergartens belonging to the Mariavite church, one parish shelter for kids conducted by St. Stanisław Kostka Shelter Society, one Polish-German shelter belonging to the Christian Charitable Society in Łódź, two Roman Catholic kindergartens by the Churches of Saint Joseph and of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and one Jewish nursery (nursery “Herclijs” located at 75 Cegielniana Street). In these establishments, “children are fed very well,” and the place itself “gives impression of being rich.”

M. Wernikówna did not limit her observations to the condition of kindergartens in Łódź, but she also informed teachers and the administration of the visited facilities about their “pedagogical deficiencies.” Moreover, she contacted the local authorities in Łódź, asking them to support the social facilities for preschool children, because the lack of money in those establishments could result in closing some of them. M. Wernikówna made a statement about “the critical conditions of the kindergartens in Łódź” during her meeting with the leader of the Municipal Department of Education and

¹³ M. Wernikówna noted that the individual reviews of each kindergarten were included in the separate reports, passed to MWRiOP.

Culture – S. Kopciński (before she sent the report from the visits to the central education authorities in Warsaw). She suggested three options: first of all – the government of Łódź should take care of financial expenditures by subsidising the teachers' salaries; second – it should cover the expenses for didactic aids, and third – the authorities should finance the work of a supervisor of preschool education in Łódź (the auditor of kindergartens and shelters) according to the suggestion of the Department of Preschool Education in the Ministry of Religious Denominations and Public Enlightenment (until such position was created by the Educational Authority of the School District of Łódź) (*Sprawozdanie z wizytacji ochronek m. Łodzi* 1921). S. Kopciński was forced to get in touch with Dorota Kłuszyńska (the president of the Social Care Department) as the complaints were raised about the kindergartens which the municipal Social Care Department was responsible for. During the next meeting, which was held on 12th December 1921 in the presence of the School Inspector of the city of Łódź, M. Wernikówna was assured that the local government accepted the proposed solutions. These solutions were to be implemented under one condition – the right to influence pedagogical and personnel issues related to those facilities. The arrangements among the Ministry of Religious Denominations and Public Enlightenment, the Municipal Department of Education and Culture and local school authorities (School Inspector of Łódź) were communicated to the administration of the charitable organisations and other public institutions running the kindergartens during the meeting on 15th December 1921. Although not everyone agreed on the presented solutions, the majority of participants accepted the decisions taken. The arrangements also included the provision of medical care for children by the local administration in the nurseries, and the agreement to pass the reports summarising the activity of each facility to the School Inspector of the city of Łódź, should they receive financial support from the local government.

Preschool education in Łódź in 1922-1924

At the beginning of January 1922, the representatives of the local government decided that the municipal Department of Education and Culture (in the Schooling Branch) would be responsible for any issues related to the operation of the public nurseries and shelters in terms of their pedagogical objectives. On behalf of the local government of Łódź, that department was to be responsible for employing and subsidising the salaries for the teachers and the supervisor of preschool education, and it was to equip the institutions with the required teaching aids (*Sprawozdanie z wizytacji ochronek m. Łodzi* 1921: k. 1; *Wyciąg z posiedzenia Wydziału Szkolnictwa Magistratu m. Łodzi* [Report from the meeting of the Department of Education of the

city of Łódź] 1922, resolution no. 1; k. 2. *Wyciąg z posiedzenia Magistratu m. Łodzi 1922, resolution no. 14*). The City Council accepted the resolution on 8th February (*Sprawozdanie z wizytacji ochronek. Łodzi 1921: k. 4; Wyciąg z protokołu posiedzenia Rady Miejskiej m. Łodzi 1922*). The following document was soon passed by the municipal administration to the management board of organisations, parishes and private people (the owners of the kindergartens):

(1) The administration of the kindergarten agrees that the Department of Education and Culture will provide them with educational guidelines; the Department supervises the kindergarten through its auditors. (2) The Department of Education and Culture employs and dismisses teaching personnel in agreement with the administration of the kindergarten and/or its management board. (3) The Department of Education and Culture supplies kindergartens with teaching aids; these aids remain the property of the city. (4) The people who are now employed in the kindergartens remain on their position until 1st July 1922; further employment will depend on having the right qualifications, and employment decisions will be made by the Department of Education and Culture. Educational personnel can be dismissed at any time for improper behaviour. (5) The Department of Education and Culture takes over the educational direction of the nurseries which already conform to the hygienic and educational standards. (*Sprawozdanie z wizytacji ochronek m. Łodzi 1921: k. 14*)¹⁴

For the next few months of the year 1922, the letters were being exchanged between the Department of Education and Culture and the representatives of the management boards which approved of the above mentioned conditions. As it has already been mentioned, some of the owners of the social shelters for children were afraid of excessive interference from the local authorities, so they did not accept those conditions. One of them was father Bronisław Siennicki, the rector of the Roman Catholic Church of Saint Joseph, who did not allow the Department of Education and Culture to take over the educational direction of the nurseries in this parish and, therefore, rejected the financial support of the local government. He explained it this way:

The management board of the shelter believes that the current way of running the facility is the only way the children can grow in fair, righteous and calm atmosphere. Moreover, allowing the Department to experiment on those children would mean a betrayal of their parents who chose those nurseries because of the direction they are heading towards. (*Sprawozdanie z wizytacji ochronek m. Łodzi 1921: k. 35-36*)

¹⁴ The conditions which need to be fulfilled so the Department of Education and Culture can take over particular kindergartens according to the resolution of the City Council on 8th February of the current year [1922].

The management boards of other parishes accepted the given terms. According to the research, it can be said that 15 establishments for preschool children signed the agreement with the local authorities between December 1922 and May 1923 (*Sprawozdanie z wizytacji ochronek m. Łodzi* 1921: 396-397). It included nine kindergartens existing since 1918¹⁵ and six, newly opened, social early education facilities in Łódź.¹⁶ In time, Department of Education and Culture took over more institutions, but some of them broke up the cooperation with the local authorities and others were closed by the supervisory bodies (at the turn of 1930/1931, the Department was subsidising 14 kindergartens, but the city had already owned 11 nurseries; Sosnowska 2017: 296-297, table 3).

Newly elected representatives of the Department of Education and Culture (local elections took place in May 1923) decided to conduct audits of the social kindergartens financed, i.e. managed by the city, in the school year 1923/1924. They visited the institutions in person from 4th to 8th October 1923, so they could see for themselves how they were performing. The audit summary indicated that the establishments did not conform to the most basic childcare requirements. These observations were presented to the associates during the session held by the Department of Education and Culture. In case of the newly created Nursery of the Consumer Association “Nasze Wyzwolenie” at 22 Sienkiewicza Street, it was noted that:

The facilities are located in the annex on the third floor. The nursery is not there though; there is a school section, which forms a part of the school at 17 Cegielniana Street, managed by the same association. Estera Chardak, the teacher, was present in the building. The number of children enrolled – 40, present – 16. There is no furniture, equipment or teaching aids. There are a few little chairs, perhaps from the nursery, and a few tables. The teacher does not know where the nursery is. (APŁ, AmŁ, WOiK 1922-1925: k. 400)

The following has been written about one of the nurseries of the Workers’ Department of Child Education and Care, opened in Łódź in May 1923 and supported by the Branch of the Polish Socialist Party in Łódź:

The facility on the 1st floor consists of one, tiny, destroyed room full of benches; there is no room for playing. Out of 25 children enrolled, only 13 are present; these are

¹⁵ Nursery of the Christian Charity Society in Łódź at 6 Smugowa Street, kindergartens of St. Stanisław Kostka Shelter Society, Nursery of father K. Szmidl by the Church of the Holy Cross, kindergartens in the Mariavite churches, nursery in Bałuty, Jewish nursery at 4 Smugowa Street.

¹⁶ The newly opened institutions were: J. Szurek Shelter of the Cooperative Society “Młot” at 14 Piaramowicza Street, shelters of the Consumer Association “Nasze Wyzwolenie” at 25 Łagiewnicka Street and 22 Sienkiewicza Street, and nurseries of the Workers’ Department of Child Education and Care (at 53 Piotrkowska Street, 196 Wólczajska Street, 39 Aleksandrowska Street).

school-age children who attend schools in the afternoon; that's where they do their homework. They stay in the room from 9am to 12am. Ms [Zofia] Machalska, the teacher conducting the lessons, declares that in the afternoon she conducts classes for another group of children from 2pm to 5pm at 196 Wólczańska Street. According to her statement, the facilities at that address are even worse: there are 50 children enrolled over there, who, again, attend classes at schools in the morning. (APŁ, AmŁ, WOiK, 1922-1925: k. 404)

It can be argued that, although the management boards of the kindergartens had signed the agreement with the local authorities and were financially supported by them, they did not follow the provisions included in the agreement. Although the state of these kindergartens, as described above, was not acceptable, it is worth highlighting that similar conditions were noted in the nurseries across the entire country. Z. Żukiewiczowa was speaking about it while presenting the summary of the 15 years' work of kindergartens in Poland:

The statistics covering the year 1919/1920, prepared by the Ministry of Religious Denominations and Public Enlightenment showed that only 60.8% of those facilities provided care for the children of preschool age only, and could be registered as authentic institutions of preschool education. Other institutions gathered children even as old as 14-15, teaching them prayers, reading, writing, basic Maths and manual works. Even if there were preschool children among them, they were more of an "addition" and did not get much attention. (Żukiewiczowa 1933/34: 38)

Therefore, the following had been deemed as necessary by the new authorities of the Department of Education and Culture, in order to "improve the preschool education in the existing kindergartens": "To organise a professional audit and periodical inspections of the nurseries; to determine the minimum needs of the establishments; to supply them with teaching aids; to supply them with food; to provide medical care for children attending those kindergartens." In order to implement this policy, the authorities passed the proper resolution (APŁ, AmŁ, WOiK 1922-1925: k. 399). In terms of the future development of preschool education in Łódź, the following record was very important: "at the same time, it was agreed that new, public kindergartens should be opened once the suitable buildings were available" (APŁ, AmŁ, WOiK 1922-1925: k. 399). At that time, one of the reasons for the lack of the initiative to open new, municipal preschool education institutions was the lack of available rooms. In the meantime, Maria Łabęcka, the director of the National Nursery Seminar in Łódź (then in Opatówek, near Kalisz) carried out another audit in the social kindergartens for a fee. In the middle of October 1923, she received the authorization to conduct the inspections in 15 establishments. During her inspections, it turned out that only a few facilities were of a good standard, while the majority of them

were lacking teaching aids, their hygienic conditions were very poor, and buildings required renovation. The most serious complaints concerned the personnel qualifications, therefore, apart from continuing the regular inspections, she organised, at the beginning of 1924, a methodical conference, which she also enriched with the examples of teaching aids. The conference was attended by the teachers and municipal education authorities (*Ochrony-przedszkola*, DZMŁ 1924: 12). Also, the Department of Education and Culture sent a message to the management boards of all kindergartens, encouraging the teachers to visit the exhibition about early school education in Warsaw. The authorities of the Department of Education and Culture summarised their 6-months' work (August 1923 – February 1924) in the following words: "The aim of the Schooling Branch was to standardise the educational methods across the nurseries; ... we were hoping to get the teaching personnel interested in ... the latest methods used at this level of education" (*Wydział Ośw. [Oświaty] i Kultury*, DZMŁ 1924: 32 and 33).

The local government was in charge of 17 kindergartens at that time (14 for Christian children and 3 for Jewish ones), and it paid the salaries of 31 teachers (24 and 7, respectively). Six nurseries had their own buildings, while others were renting rooms, quite often not suitable in terms of hygienic and sanitary conditions, and poorly equipped with teaching aids. Some of the upcoming projects of the local educational authorities included providing a permanent medical care for children, buying necessary equipment and teaching aids, and most of all – "organising a network of model kindergartens-shelters located in the city according to a specific plan" (WOiK, DZMŁ 1924: 33). The initiators of the project were hoping to launch the institutions in different locations of the city, but mainly in the suburbs. The outskirts were inhabited by working-class people, mainly Polish, and the children from these families were the ones to be provided with the preschool education.

On 1st March 1924, the city of Łódź opened its first preschool institutions, which was a very important event in terms of the development of preschool education in Poland. The First Municipal Kindergarten-Shelter for Children was located in the renovated building at 42 Radwańska Street (*Oddział Szkolnictwa*, DZMŁ 1924: 8).¹⁷ The institution was furnished with 8 tables, 48 chairs and a teacher's table (APŁ, AmŁ, WOiK 1924-1926: k. 82). The enrolment to the new kindergarten was scheduled to take place in the last week of February, but there were not many parents willing to enroll their children at that time. The establishment was opened in a wealthy area of Łódź, which was mainly inhabited by the people of German origin. According to Janina Pawłowska, who later became the inspector of preschool education in Łódź, parents were rather suspicious about the municipal kindergartens during the first few

¹⁷ In 1929 it moved to the building at 54 Radwańska Street.

years of their existence (Pawłowska 1935: 616). The Department of Education and Culture made a request to the management board of the Municipal Primary School number 44 at 69 Radwańska Street, to make parents aware of the newly opened establishment in the area. The campaign was successful and 32 children aged 4-6 were enrolled; one preschool group was operating. Eugenia Włodarkówna, a graduate of the National Nursery Seminar, was the first teacher employed there. She was also asked to perform the manager's duties even before the kindergarten was opened (APŁ, AmŁ, WOİK 1924-1926: k. 116). Another preschool group was created there in the school year 1924/1925, and Maria Wiśniewska was employed to take care of it.

In 1924, the local authorities in Łódź opened two other kindergartens at 2/4 Waława Street and 100 Kilińskiego Street (then 39 Przejazd Street) (APŁ, AmŁ, WOİK 1924-1926: k. 102, 105, 107; II Municipal Shelter-Kindergarten 1924-1926: k. 20). All the three municipal institutions were consecrated on 22nd November with the participation of the representatives of the Church, local authorities and the Educational Authority of the Łódź Schooling District. Marian Cynarski, the president of Łódź at that time, "explained the gathered children and parents the meaning of the kindergartens and emphasized that the local government ... would aim at opening as many kindergartens as possible in this working city" (*Poświęcenie miejskich ochron-przedszkoli* 1924: 14). The speech was followed by "demonstrative lessons," games and activities for children. Over 200 children aged 4-7 were enrolled to these three kindergartens at that time.

It is worth mentioning that the opportunities related to opening new institutions supervised by the local authorities developed – in 1925, two more kindergartens – shelters were opened (APŁ, AmŁ, WOİK 1927-1930). In 1926/1927, 376 children (183 girls and 193 boys) attended five municipal kindergartens, but much more children attended the social nurseries subsidized by the city.

It should be briefly mentioned that further development and transformations that took place in Łódź in 1926-1939 in the preschool education area are not only connected with opening new institutions, but also with other issues. First, inspector Janina Pawłowka was employed by the Department of Education and Culture as the director of the Preschool Education Department, and – because of her enthusiasm for new educational concepts (mainly M. Montessori's and O. Decroly's ideas) – she tried to implement such assumptions into the pedagogical work of the kindergartens in Łódź – both social and municipal ones (Sosnowska 2016).¹⁸ Second, because of the multinational and multi-faith population of the city, the local government was trying

¹⁸ During her first year at the Department of Education and Culture, J. Pawłowka made 161 visits, attended 11 meetings with parents at kindergartens and organised 7 conferences in which the teaching personnel from the kindergartens in Łódź participated.

to integrate the environments and entities running their own institutions in order to provide the children with the proper financial support and educational care (examples include joint conferences, courses and workshops, trips to Lisków and Warsaw, and joint educational celebrations) (Sosnowska 2017). Third, due to the worldwide economic crisis – which hit Łódź in 1930-1935 – and the way it affected daily life through shutting the factories and production facilities, causing unemployment, pauperism, hunger, illnesses, evictions and social pathology, the educational priorities of the city changed (Sosnowska 2018: 36-58). While implementing the national and local aid programs, the kindergartens were feeding children on a regular basis and provided them with social care. However, they did not stop implementing the latest educational concepts into the educational practice. Fourth, once the educational act was enforced on 11th March 1932, the issues related to personnel qualifications were sorted, although the local authorities in Łódź had already established the minimum requirements for a kindergarten teacher. Such a teacher was to graduate from the 7-class primary school and a public nursery seminar, and she was to have “relevant experience” in working with children (APŁ, AmŁ, WOiK, sygn. 1927-1930: k. 6).

Conclusion

In terms of the socio-educational issues raised by the local government in Łódź in their first term of office, preschool education of children was not a priority up until 1921, when the supervision over the social kindergartens (the only ones operating in Łódź) was given to the Department of Education and Culture of the Government of Łódź. This was the beginning of the transformation period in the preschool education area, because up until then, any issues related to preschool establishments were handled by the Department of Social Charity – a body of municipal administration focused on philanthropic, and not educational, issues. Another step leading to beneficial changes in the education policy of the local school authorities was made due to the poor results achieved during the audits performed in Łódź by the representative of the Preschool Education Department at the Ministry of Religious Denominations and Public Enlightenment. A significant negligence in operating social nurseries was revealed at that time. As a result, at the beginning of 1922, the local authorities decided to supervise those institutions and subsidise teachers' salaries. During the next inspections, which were conducted by the newly elected members of the Department of Education and Culture along with the director of the National Nursery Seminar in Łódź, even more faults were revealed in the preschool institutions. In 1924, in order to improve the condition of preschool education in Łódź, the local authorities decided to open the first municipal nursery-shelter for children. This way, the local

government wanted and – as shown in the research – managed to give a new educational direction to preschool education in the city.

It is worth mentioning, that the status of the establishments dedicated to children aged 3-7 changed in the interwar period. Soon after the First World War, they were treated as the places providing care for children and financial support for families. The meaning of kindergartens changed within the next few years – a nursery-shelter became a place of upbringing and educational activities for children. However, it did not change the fact that in Łódź, where around half a million people lived at that time (including 30.000 children in the preschool age), only few of them (1.500 in 1926) could attend early education institutions. After a decade (1924-1934), there were 59 kindergartens in Łódź, including 13 municipal institutions to which only 825 children were enrolled. Twenty-eight of them were social kindergartens with 1.753 children enrolled, and 18 private kindergartens had 330 pupils. There were, in total, 33.680 preschool aged children in Łódź, but only 2.908 (8.6%) of them attended the nurseries (*Z życia miast. Przedszkola miejskie*, DZMŁ 1933: 958).

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