



Submitted: 21.05.2019

Accepted: 12.09.2019

Suggested citation: Hajkowska M. (2019). *Education of Female Preschool Teachers in Maria Papiewska's Private Seminar for Kindergarten Teachers in Lublin (1918-1939)*, "Edukacja Elementarna w Teorii i Praktyce," vol. 14, no. 3(53), pp. 63-73.

DOI: 10.35765/eetp.2019.1453.04

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Education of Female Preschool Teachers in Maria Papiewska's Private Seminar for Kindergarten Teachers in Lublin (1918-1939)

KEYWORDS

● Maria Papiewska, kindergarten teacher, seminar, preschool education, Lublin.

ABSTRACT

The aim of the article is to present the issue of education at Maria Papiewska's Private Seminar for Kindergarten Teachers in Lublin (1918-1939). In particular, the article attempts to analyse the seminar's training program based on the archival materials, including the exam reports. Due to the nature of the sources and the specific features of the research, the methods characteristic of historical sciences were used. The interview consists of three parts. The first one presents a biography of the founder of the seminar, Maria Papiewska. The second part is an overview of the seminar's activities, including the organizational assumptions, the admission criteria and the students' characteristics. Part three discusses the curriculum. The seminar was the only educational institution for preschool teachers in Lublin operating until the outbreak of World War II. Despite the fact that the candidates came from various backgrounds and some of them had only completed five grades of the elementary school, no effort was made to obtain the highest qualifications by them. The problem of preparing the kindergarten teachers for work seems timeless. The love for working with children and the willingness to break routines and patterns remain unchanged.

Introduction

The establishment of the preschool educational institutions in Poland took place in the first half of the 19th century. The first shelters for small children in the Kingdom of Poland were established in Warsaw (1839), Kalisz (1844), Płock (1857), Biała Podlaska (1857), and Kielce (1858) (Sandler 1968: 53; Winiarz 2005: 68). Under the influence of the pedagogical trends and views on upbringing small children, the need for the education of kindergarten teachers was considered as necessary. In 1870s, the first courses for children's carers and supervisors were organised. Teresa Pruszk-Mleczkowska began to conduct them in Warsaw (Leżańska 1998: 15). Maria Weryho-Radziwiłłowicz, a freelance promoter of preschool education, also had some important achievements in this respect (Wróbel 1967: 20).

The first activities aimed at introducing preschool education in the Lublin region were taken in the second half of the 19th century by the Lublin Charity Society. Its president, Mieczysław Mackiewicz, then the governor of Lublin, organized the care for several orphans by placing them in Lublin families. As a result of his actions, further initiatives were taken by the inhabitants of Lublin. In 1853, thanks to the efforts of Róża Potocka Rembielińska, the first orphanage was established at Dolna Panna Maria Street. The creation of the "Froebel Factory" in Lublin, in which carers and nannies were to be educated, had to wait until 1908. It was opened due to the work and commitment of Maria Papiewska, one of the Lublin activists popularizing the ideas of the preschool education in practice (Bagieńska 1964: 252; Sandler 1968: 115-119; Winiarz 2005: 68).

The purpose of the article is to present the education of preschool teachers in the Private Seminar for Kindergarten Teachers led by Maria Papiewska in the years 1918-1939. The source basis are the archival materials preserved in the State Archives in Lublin. Particularly valuable materials included the reports on the diploma exams, the transcripts of seminarians' certificates, and the main catalogues containing the lists of the students and the teaching programs implemented in the seminar.

The biography and professional profile of the founder of the seminar

Maria Papiewska was born on April 24 1859, in Klimkiewiczów near Sandomierz. She graduated from the school for girls of Aleksandra Świerczyńska in Lublin, which she completed in 1876. Then she continued her education at the "Flying University" in Warsaw. After returning to Lublin, she started working as a science teacher in the school for the girls from which she had graduated. She also gave lessons in private

homes. In order to improve her qualifications, she went to Warsaw for the courses led by M. Weryho-Radziwiłłowicz. In 1885, she became the headmaster of the Maria John Freberg school at 7 Zamojska Street, which, after four years, she bought as her own. At that time, in a new building at 4 Namiestnikowska Street, she created a Froebel garden. From 1893, she undertook the education of tutors and nannies by organizing the pedagogical courses. These activities initiated the establishment of the “Froebel Institute” in 1908, which, ten years later, was transformed into the Security Seminar, and then, in 1929, into the Seminar for Kindergarten Teachers. It should be emphasized that, after the outbreak of World War I, numerous groups of refugees arrived in Lublin (Winiarz 2005: 72). Thus, Papiewska responded to the social needs related not only to the care for small children but also to the education of children’s supervisors and teachers. In addition, she was involved in various educational and social works, including secret lessons, summer camps for children and youth, and activities such as: Women’s Social Work Circle or Lublin Branch of the Polish Teachers’ Union. She was interested in the preschool education system of Fredrich Froebel and Maria Montessori. She was constantly expanding her knowledge by participating in the courses and training sessions in Krakow, Zakopane and abroad (Belgium, France). She transferred her experience from the educational institutions to Poland. She also acted in scouting as an instructor, organizer and participant of the camps. She valued the new educational methods and the innovation in education; she negated the routine. She shared her knowledge with the teachers and cooperated with the school administration. The organizations in which she was involved after World War I included the Women’s Civil Work Association and the Lublin Cultural Work Association. The outbreak of World War II interrupted her seminar, kindergarten and elementary school activities. Despite the political situation, she remained active, among others, conducting the secret teaching in her apartment, as well as organizing the food collections for the people in need. She also helped the prisoners, in particular those imprisoned at the Castle and in Majdanek. She died on February 4, 1942 in Lublin (Doroszewski 1994: 530-532; 1996: 182; 2005: 174-175; Łogoźna 1991: 219-220).

Maria Papiewska had a huge impact on the future teaching staff. Irena Bagińska, the tutor of “Froebel Institute” run by Maria Papiewska, mentioned that the latter influenced everyone with whom she collaborated by her own example. She encouraged her colleagues to being committed, creating warm attitude, honesty and, above all, diligence. She shared her knowledge and experience with everyone, and she was guided by love when working with children. The pupils remembered her as a cheerful, warm-hearted, caring person. She was able to create an unusual atmosphere and build the lasting relationships with those who looked after her as a mother. She did not break the contact with them even after they finished their education. Often, she was still present in their lives, counselling and helping them. Her meetings with the adult

pupils were full of the emotions and joy (Bagieńska 1960: 508). In her teaching, she emphasized the importance of the individual contact with the child. Large numbers of the students was an obstacle in conducting the classes, as well as in the knowledge of the pupils. Therefore, according to her recommendations, each preschool group consisted of maximum 18 people. In the organization of work, she valued order and diligence. She took care of the thorough preparation of the materials for the classes, their aesthetic appearance and high quality. Many designs for the decorations, costumes and headgear were made by her. She paid attention to hygiene and cleanliness in the child's environment. In the program of the activities for children, she emphasized the patriotic education. She taught Polish history by presenting to the pupils the silhouettes of Polish heroes, and making the pupils familiar with the national symbols: the anthem, the emblem, the flag. She developed a sense of respect for the country in her students. The science classes conducted in the seminar were different than other classes. She made sure that the pupils were surrounded by plants, and there were always many potted flowers on the window sills. She also made the children involved in supporting her work. The lessons were enriched by the piano, singing and rhythmic lessons. She made sure that children listened to music every day during the games and plays. She encouraged them to physical activities, such as dancing (Bagieńska 1960: 509; Doroszewski 1994: 530-536).

The recruitment and learning system in the seminar

Maria Papiewska was convinced of the need for the proper pedagogical preparation of kindergarten teachers. She was familiar with the rules of the preschool education presented by Henryk Pestalozzi, Fredrich Froebel and Maria Montessori. She managed the seminar for educators continuously until the outbreak of World War II. Initially, the school's offer included a two-year teaching course, which, in 1929, was extended by one more year. According to the ordinances of the Ministry of Religious Denominations and Public Enlightenment (Polish abbreviation: MWRiOP), girls aged 16 to 30 were admitted to the seminar, provided that they had completed at least three high school classes or a seven-grade elementary school (Weryho 1923: 389; Wolski 1928: 70; Łogoźna 1989: 51). Other criteria that were taken into account included musical abilities and kindness in dealing with children. The analysis of the archival materials shows that, in the recruitment process, the candidates submitted the following documents: application, birth certificate, two photographs, health opinion, and appropriate certificates confirming previous education (Archiwum Państwowe Lubelskie. *Prywatne Seminarium dla Wychowawczyń Przedszkoli Marii Papiewskiej w Lublinie*, sign. 1, *Protokoły egzaminów dojrzałości i odpisy świadectw*: 80). Due to the

age of the girls, parents often prepared and delivered these documents on their behalf. In the archival sources, the information on the women's health was sometimes kept. The medical records show that the anomalies in the external appearance, disabilities, ticks and grimaces on the face, skin diseases, deformed mouth and nose, as well as infectious diseases were the factors that made it impossible to take up the studies and later – professional tasks (Archiwum Państwowe Lubelskie. *Prywatne Seminarium dla Wychowawczyń Przedszkoli Marii Papiewskiej w Lublinie*, sign. 2, *Protokoły egzaminów dojrzałości i odpisy świadectw*: 89). From the testimonials, we can learn about surgical procedures, diseases, as well as vaccinations of the seminar students (Archiwum Państwowe Lubelskie. *Prywatne Seminarium dla Wychowawczyń Przedszkoli Marii Papiewskiej w Lublinie*, sygn. 1, *Protokoły egzaminów dojrzałości i odpisy świadectw*: 138). Due to the incompleteness of information, it was difficult to determine the social origin of the candidates. The students came not only from Lublin and the surrounding area, but also from the distant towns from various parts of Poland and from abroad, e.g. Lviv, Odessa, Vilnius and Kiev. It resulted from the distribution of such seminars in Poland and abroad, and from the lack of such schools in the places where the future seminarians came from. Based on the seminar completion certificates, it was found that, as a rule, the candidates declared a Roman Catholic denomination. It can be presumed that due to the subject of teaching at the seminar, which was religion, it could be one of the admission criteria. However, the analysis of the archival materials does not confirm such a thesis (Archiwum Państwowe Lubelskie. *Prywatne Seminarium dla Wychowawczyń Przedszkoli Marii Papiewskiej w Lublinie*, sign. 1, *Protokoły egzaminów dojrzałości i odpisy świadectw*: 137). The admission to the seminar was mainly determined by the result of the entrance examination the purpose of which was to check the candidates' knowledge gained in the primary or junior high school. Due to the low interest in the school, it can be assumed that it was only a formal procedure (Doroszewski 2002: 131; 2004: 181). Maria Papiewska's seminar was a private school, and the annual fee was one hundred rubles. In addition to Maria Papiewska, the teaching staff included the following people: Irena Araszkievicz, priest Andrzej Chlastawa, Jadwiga Gajdzińska, Józef Guzek, Kamila Jedlewska, Halina Wołowska, Anna Wróblewska. Most of the teachers were employed in other Lublin schools, while in the seminar they worked additional hours (Doroszewski 2004: 181).

The final stage, which initially took place after two, and later after three years of education, was the diploma exam, after which the seminarians received the school completion certificates and gained the right to work in preschool institutions. The analysis of the examination reports shows that such an exam consisted of a written part related to Pedagogy and Polish. The written exam evaluated logical thinking, proper argumentation and the stylistic correctness of the text. After obtaining a positive result, the seminarians were admitted to the oral part – also in the same subjects, and

additionally in Religious Education, Science and knowledge of the modern Poland and History. In rare cases, the seminarians also passed the exam in the subjects in which they had received unsatisfactory grades in the last year of the study. The archival minutes contain the excerpts from the grades of female students from the last year of their study. As a rule, their positive results constituted the admission to the diploma exam. Maria Papiewska wanted the seminar to educate teachers of the highest qualifications and knowledge. That is why, the number of students admitted to the diploma exam was always low. This phenomenon was treated as a necessary stage in the pursuit of the highest quality and learning outcomes. The School District Board consented to an extramural exam entitling people to teach in the kindergarten (Archiwum Państwowe Lubelskie. *Prywatne Seminarium dla Wychowawczyń Przedszkoli Marii Papiewskiej w Lublinie*, sign. 2, *Protokoły egzaminów dojrzałości i odpisy świadectw*: 85, 264).

The number of students at the seminar was steadily increasing since the beginning of its creation. In the school year 1922/23, there were 24 of them at all courses (years), then – 27, in 1925/26 – 28, and in 1928/29 – 54 people. In 1930/31, the number of students at all three courses was 44 and it was close to the number of girls in the subsequent years. The decrease in the number of students is observed a year before the outbreak of World War II, when there were 36 of them. In each school year, between 6 and 16 people enrolled in the first year of study, and the third year was completed by 9 to 16 students (Archiwum Państwowe Lubelskie. *Prywatne Seminarium dla Wychowawczyń Przedszkoli Marii Papiewskiej w Lublinie*, sign. 3-22, *Katalog Główny*). In the years 1923/24 – 1938/39, 187 people graduated from the school with a diploma authorizing them to take up the work (Doroszewski 2004: 184).

The Seminar education program

During the functioning of the institution since 1908, then as the “Froebel Institute,” the curriculum changes could be noticed. The annual teaching plan included theoretical classes, practical pedagogy, Froebel games, gymnastics, singing, drawings, Froebel works and slides (Archiwum Państwowe Lubelskie. *Dyrekcje Szkolne*, sign. 1331: 1-2). Later, after being transformed into the seminar, the curriculum of the school was based on the MWRiOP guidelines. From 1929, the first year included subjects such as Religious Education, the practice and methodology of the first years of teaching, Polish, knowledge of the contemporary Poland, Mathematics, drawing, manual works, singing, playing the violin, and Physical Education. Both Zoology and Botany were implemented in the Biology program. In the second year, in turn, the girls also studied Psychology, Child Science and Anatomy. In the last year, instead of Anatomy, Hygiene was taught. In addition, the students could learn to play the

violin or mandolin (Archiwum Państwowe Lubelskie. *Prywatne Seminarium dla Wychowawczyń Przedszkoli Marii Papiewskiej w Lublinie*, sign. 10, *Katalog Główny*).

The analysis of the exam reports enabled obtaining the information of what was required of the future kindergarten teachers, as well as an outline of the seminar curricula.

During the written exam in pedagogy, the seminarians had to demonstrate both the theoretical and practical knowledge. The themes of the essays were quite extensive. The students were supposed to describe the issues related to the history and theory of the preschool education. For example, they had to present the role of Vilnius and Kremenets schools, describe the existing preschool education system and indicate the differences and similarities between them. Among the topics of the essays there were many references to the role of the educator in the kindergarten. The seminarians were required to know how to handle a child, shape their interests, conduct the lectures, observe them, use games and plays, and they were to be aware of the importance of preschool in their upbringing. The issues of applying penalties and rewards, as well as the cooperation between the home and the kindergarten, were not omitted. In addition, the students had to demonstrate the knowledge of the child's psychology and intellectual, physical, social, moral and emotional development. Some themes were creative and required the girls to be creative and inventive. For example, they had to describe how they imagine working in a kindergarten, describe one day in an institution, or describe how they would present a topic specified by the examiners to children (Archiwum Państwowe Lubelskie. *Prywatne Seminarium dla Wychowawczyń Przedszkoli Marii Papiewskiej w Lublinie*, sign. 1-2, *Protokoły egzaminów dojrzałości i odpisy świadectw*). In turn, during the oral exam, their knowledge of the history of education was checked. The seminarians had to be familiar with the views and activities of, among others, the representatives of different pedagogical trends, such as Jan Amos Comenius, Stanisław Konarski, Jan Jakub Rousseau, and Jan Henryk Pestalozzi. They were required to know the preschool education system by Fredrich Froebel and Maria Montessori. The questions on the history of the education raised the questions about the activities of the Commission of National Education. Their knowledge on the functioning of the modern legislative system was also checked. Similarly to the written exam, the seminarians had to demonstrate the knowledge of the child, his nature and development stages. They characterized the concept of perception, impression, attention, imagination, thinking, intelligence, memory, feelings, upbringing, and education. They had to know the factors affecting the child's development. In particular, they were required to know a lot about working in the kindergarten. The questions such as: games, plays and their educational significance, demonstrative methods, the influence of the kindergarten on the development, and upbringing and education of children, appeared very often. The job of a tutor was to be familiar to

them. They were also asked about the pedagogical qualifications and their impact on the quality of the kindergarten work (Archiwum Państwowe Lubelskie. *Prywatne Seminarium dla Wychowawczyń Przedszkoli Marii Papiewskiej w Lublinie*, sign. 1-2, *Protokoły egzaminów dojrzałości i odpisy świadectw*).

The written exam included checking the knowledge of Polish literature, including the works of Adam Mickiewicz, Juliusz Słowacki, Maria Konopnicka, Hans Christian Andersen, Józef Ignacy Kraszewski, Bolesław Prus, Stefan Żeromski, and Eliza Orzeszkowa. The knowledge of children's literature was required, too, both during the written and oral exam. In the written work, the students had to refer to the authors publishing for children, and describe their favourite literary heroes or their favourite contemporary books. There were also the questions in which the students were required to express the opinions on how reading books influences the formation of the social and moral attitudes. There were many questions about the contemporary problems appearing in the literary works and the comparisons of the literary world with the real one (Archiwum Państwowe Lubelskie. *Prywatne Seminarium dla Wychowawczyń Przedszkoli Marii Papiewskiej w Lublinie*, sign. 1-2, *Protokoły egzaminów dojrzałości i odpisy świadectw*). Literature, language and grammar questions were formulated at the oral exam in this subject. They were both general and detailed. The list of the authors whose works the students had to know was more extensive than for the written exam. Such authors included writers from the Renaissance to the Modern Times, e.g. Jan Kochanowski, Mikołaj Rej, Kazimierz Przerwa-Tetmajer, and Stanisław Wyspiański. In particular, the knowledge of children's literature was required, for example texts by Janusz Korczak, Jadwiga Chrzęszczyńska-Trzeciakowa, and Jadwiga Warnkówna. Among the questions, there were very often the questions in which the students had to present the genesis and the characteristics of a particular literary work or its characters. There were open questions that required the students not only to know the problem, but also to be creative and to carry out the proper analysis and synthesis. As with the written exam, the students answered the questions about the importance of the literary activity of selected authors. With a view to check the grammar knowledge of the pupils, the most common questions were asked about the characteristics of a single sentence – subordinate or coordinate – or about the parsing of a sentence (Archiwum Państwowe Lubelskie. *Prywatne Seminarium dla Wychowawczyń Przedszkoli Marii Papiewskiej w Lublinie*, sign. 1-2, *Protokoły egzaminów dojrzałości i odpisy świadectw*).

At the oral exam in Science, the students had to demonstrate the knowledge of Chemistry, Biology, including Botany and Zoology, and Human Sciences. They were required to know about the processes and mechanisms which govern the world of plants and animals. They answered the questions about the structure of the human body, its individual organs, and physiological processes. Not only the knowledge of

the theory was tested, but also the ability to think and apply the knowledge in the pre-school practice. For example, there were questions about the child's skin care, hygiene, diet, prevention and treatment of diseases (Archiwum Państwowe Lubelskie. *Prywatne Seminarium dla Wychowawczyń Przedszkoli Marii Papiewskiej w Lublinie*, sign. 1-2, *Protokoły egzaminów dojrzałości i odpisy świadectw*).

The exam on the knowledge of the contemporary Poland was aimed at checking the students' knowledge of History, Politics, Economics, Economy, as well as Education and Culture. They had to show an excellent knowledge of the surrounding world, but, above all, their own country. The exam included the questions about the nation, administrative division of the country, Constitution, civil rights, religious tolerance, natural resources, as well as trade and industry. The students also answered the questions on the history of Poland (Archiwum Państwowe Lubelskie. *Prywatne Seminarium dla Wychowawczyń Przedszkoli Marii Papiewskiej w Lublinie*, sign. 1-2, *Protokoły egzaminów dojrzałości i odpisy świadectw*).

The diploma exam also included religion. However, by analysing the protocols it was found that most of the students did not have to answer the questions concerning that subject. Nevertheless, the basic condition had to be met: a very good grade obtained in the last, i.e. third year of studies. The school documents show that only six students were tested in this subject. They were required to know the basic religious concepts and, above all, to know the Holy Scriptures and catechism (Archiwum Państwowe Lubelskie. *Prywatne Seminarium dla Wychowawczyń Przedszkoli Marii Papiewskiej w Lublinie*, sign. 1-2, *Protokoły egzaminów dojrzałości i odpisy świadectw*).

The analysis of the protocols shows that instead of Science and knowledge about the contemporary Poland, a small group of students (only four girls) chose History. Due to the gaps in the reports, all the questions could not be determined. The available information shows that the exam contained some questions on the Constitution (Archiwum Państwowe Lubelskie. *Prywatne Seminarium dla Wychowawczyń Przedszkoli Marii Papiewskiej w Lublinie*, sign. 1-2, *Protokoły egzaminów dojrzałości i odpisy świadectw*).

As a result of the analysis of the grades, it can be stated that the oral part was the most difficult for the students. Of all the subjects, they answered two to five questions. Only in a few protocols the questions were numbered, which did not allow for an accurate determination of their exact amount and the separation of those that only performed an auxiliary function. Obtaining a very good grade at the written exam exempted the student from the oral part in this subject (Archiwum Państwowe Lubelskie. *Prywatne Seminarium dla Wychowawczyń Przedszkoli Marii Papiewskiej w Lublinie*, sign. 1-2, *Protokoły egzaminów dojrzałości i odpisy świadectw*).

Summary

Maria Papiewska's Seminar for Kindergarten Teachers was one of the few schools in the Lublin region that fulfilled the need to prepare qualified staff for working in the kindergartens in the interwar period. In terms of the organization, the program and the quality of teaching, Papiewska referred to the best European models. She referred to the traditions, adapting the content of teaching to the Polish reality, but she did not reject modern inspirations and she took into account her pedagogical intuition, negated the routine and searched for something more than just old patterns in education. Her model of preparing the kindergarten staff can be an inspiration for the contemporary educators of kindergarten teachers.

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