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## Nature and Directions of Modernisation in Preschool Education in Łódź in 1924–1939

Specyfika i kierunki modernizacji w wychowaniu  
przedszkolnym w Łodzi w latach 1924–1939

### KEYWORDS

preschool  
education in Łódź;  
public preschools;  
New Education;  
Montessori method,  
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### ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was the attempt to recreate the nature and directions of transformations which took place in preschool education in Łódź in 1924–1939. This article is a continuation of the research (related to the period of 1918–1923) the results of which have already been published in *Elementary Education in Theory and Practice* [Edukacja Elementarna w Teorii i Praktyce]. The new research problem was the establishment of the first and other preschools by the local government of the city of Łódź. The attempt was made to study the manner in which the financial basis of these preschools was organized, the way the educational and care work was performed, whether new pedagogical tendencies were followed, and what difficulties had to be overcome. To find the responses to those questions, the author of this article examined source materials in journals. Two journals were surveyed: the nation-wide *Przedszkole* [Preschool], and the local *Dziennik Zarządu Miasta Łodzi* [Journal of the Management of the City of Łódź]. It was found that, since the mid-1920s, a new direction was defined in preschool education in Łódź due to the opening of public preschools for children and to the employment of Janina Pawłowska as a municipal preschool education inspector. It was concluded that major changes which occurred in Łódź preschools in 1924–1939 concerned the area of education and didactics, in particular in work with children and their family. Following the innovative pedagogical solutions, the authorities tried to modernize the existing preschools and

open new ones, equip them with modern teaching aids, improve the quality of educational work, and introduce new forms of cooperation with parents to preschools.

## SŁOWA KLUCZE ABSTRAKT

wychowanie  
przedszkolne  
w Łodzi,  
przedszkola  
publiczne, Nowe  
Wychowanie,  
metoda Montessori,  
badania  
czasopiśmiennicze

Celem badań w niniejszym szkicu była próba odtworzenia specyfiki i kierunków przeobrażeń, jakie w dziedzinie wychowania przedszkolnego w Łodzi nastąpiły w latach 1924–1939. Artykuł jest kontynuacją badań o tej problematyce (dla okresu 1918–1923); wyniki zaprezentowano wcześniej na łamach pisma „Edukacja Elementarna w Teorii i Praktyce”. Nowy problem badawczy stanowiła kwestia powołania z inicjatywy samorządu miasta Łodzi pierwszej i kolejnych placówek przedszkolnych. Starano się prześledzić, w jaki sposób organizowano zaplecze materialne tych placówek, jak prowadzono pracę opiekuńczo-wychowawczą i dydaktyczną, czy uwzględniano nowe trendy pedagogiczne, z jakimi trudnościami się konfrontowano. W poszukiwaniu odpowiedzi sięgnięto do materiału źródłowego czasopiśmienniczego. Poddano kwerendzie dwa periodyki: pismo ogólnopolskie „Przedszkole” i o zasięgu lokalnym „Dziennik Zarządu Miasta Łodzi”. W wyniku badań stwierdzono, że nowy kierunek w wychowaniu przedszkolnym w Łodzi został wytyczony od połowy lat 20. XX w. dzięki powołaniu publicznych placówek dla dzieci w wieku przedszkolnym oraz zatrudnieniu na stanowisku miejskiej inspektorki wychowania przedszkolnego Janiny Pawłowskiej. Wniosek z badań: znaczące zmiany, jakie w latach 1924–1939 dokonały się w łódzkich przedszkolach, odnotowano w sferze wychowawczo-dydaktycznej, zwłaszcza w pracy z dzieckiem i jego rodziną. W myśl nowatorskich rozwiązań pedagogicznych starano się modernizować istniejące przedszkola i zakładać nowe, wyposażać w nowoczesne pomoce dydaktyczne, podnosić jakość pracy wychowawczej oraz wprowadzać do przedszkolnej przestrzeni nowe formy współpracy z rodzicami.

## Introduction

Two phases can be distinguished in preschool education in Łódź of the interwar period. The first covers the years after the First World War (1918–1923), from the formation of the city’s administrative structures and an attempt to normalise social issues in the city, to the achievement of relative stability in this area, and therefore – with regard to the issue of preschool education – to outlining certain organisational frameworks for the operation of institutions for preschool children and the standardisation of educational work. This work was not easy due to the different status of day-care

centres<sup>1</sup> for Christian and Jewish children run by social organisations and institutions and by private entities (individuals, factory owners). The fulfilment of most of the plans elaborated at the end of 1923 by the municipal school authorities<sup>2</sup> was only made possible by the opening of preschool education institutions run by the Łódź local government. This period of the (self-)formation and development of preschool education in Łódź was presented by the author of this text in the pages of “Elementary Education in Theory and Practice” in 2019 (Sosnowska, 2019b, pp. 27–46).

The second stage of development of preschool education in Łódź (1924–1939) was a time of intensive quantitative and qualitative changes in the functioning of kindergartens: the establishment of the first and subsequent municipal preschools, the establishment of substantive cooperation with non-public establishments, organisational and methodological transformations, buying equipment and teaching aids, planning educational and didactic work, a different/new approach to the child, specifying a new role for the teacher/educator, further training of pedagogical staff, the inclusion of the family home in the educational process, or preventive and medical care in the kindergartens. Dynamic changes in the area of preschool education took place at the turn of the 1920s and 1930s throughout the country, and were shaped by the movement, ideas and postulates of the New Education (Sośnicki, 1967, p. 45–49; Kabzińska, 2002, pp. 21–49). The level of pedagogical work of preschool institutions was determined by new pedagogical concepts and systems, including those suggested by Maria Montessori (1870–1952) and Ovid Decroly (1871–1932). When analysing the process of change more broadly, it is also important to bear in mind the key social ideas emerging after the restoration of independence in 1918 as a response to the problems and social mood of the time (unemployment, housing disaster). Modernising concepts of social life focused on the needs of groups/environments that were previously overlooked, such as women, children, workers, national minorities, and they were directed – also in the area of culture – towards integration and bridging the divisions caused by poverty or backwardness (Żarnowski, 2015, p. 49–79).

The transformations in the field of education would not have been possible without the involvement of many Polish women who were pioneers in preschool and school education<sup>3</sup>; women who were active in the central administration (e.g. in the Ministry

1 The name “kindergarten” officially appeared in 1932, along with the reform of the system of education. Until that time several names were used: day-care centre, day-care centre-preschool or preschool/kindergarten.

2 What was postulated at that time was the systematic and professional inspection of day-care centres, buying teaching aids, providing children with meals and medical care, and organizing model municipal day-care centres-kindergartens.

3 E. g. Maria Weryho-Radziwiłłowiczowa, Stefania Marciszewska-Posadzowa, Zofia Żukiewiczowa, Natalia Cicimirska, Barbara Żulińska, Maria Uklejska, Zofia Bogdanowiczowa, Antonina Winiarzowa, Aleksandra Gustowiczówna, Ida Schätzel, Janina Pawłowska.

of Religious Denominations and Public Enlightenment), who were members of teachers' unions and publishing houses which printed materials for kindergarten teachers and published books, as well as methodological materials, who performed managerial functions in schools, preschools and institutions preparing students for a profession, who worked in local government structures (Bobrowska-Nowak, 1978, pp. 275–345; Sosnowska, 2016b, pp. 31–55). In Łódź, the pioneer of preschool education was Janina Pawłowska (1896–1972), a teacher, participant in a Montessori course in England and professional training in Belgium; from 1928 an inspector of preschool education in the Department of Education and Culture in the Łódź Municipal Board (Sosnowska, 2016a, pp. 281–297). It was thanks to her vision of preschool education, her commitment, her concern for the child and, above all, the projects she implemented, that positive changes took place in Łódź kindergartens in the interwar period. As a member of the Łódź Section of Kindergarten Educators of the Polish Teachers' Union, she published texts in the magazine "Przedszkole" [Kindergarten] (the press organ of this organisation), established in 1933, revealing the state, problems and achievements of kindergarten education in Łódź. In 1929–1935, she worked as an assistant to Helena Radlińska (1879–1954) at the Łódź branch of the Free Polish University. She spoke at national and local forums about issues that were important to preschool education. Participating in 1935 in a convention entitled "Care for Children and Young People in Łódź and the Łódź Voivodeship", organised by the Łódź local government, she presented a paper in which she courageously raised the problems of preschool education in Poland at that time (Pawłowska, 1935, pp. 613–618). She pointed out the difficulties, mainly organisational ones, faced by local governments. She questioned the Act on the Educational System of 1932 (Act..., 1932) which omitted important issues such as the legal responsibility of entities organising kindergartens in a municipality or the introduction of a "kindergarten obligation", especially for 6-year-old children, before the start of schooling. In 1938, Pawłowska participated in the First All-Poland Children's Congress, which took place in Warsaw under the slogan: "Happy children – strong Poland" (Pawłowska, 1938, pp. 975–977).

The issue of preschool education in Łódź in the Second Republic has already been the subject of research by the author of this text (Sosnowska, 2014, pp. 281–306; 2016b, pp. 31–55; 2019a, pp. 392–410). The source basis for those analyses was, to a greater extent, archival material, normative documents, reporting and information materials, and studies from the interwar years. Journals and magazines were also explored (to a small extent), and these included texts by Pawłowska published in the "Przedszkole" [Kindergarten] magazine and the local press: "Dziennik Zarządu Miasta Łodzi" [Journal of the Municipal Board of the City of Łódź]. Such sources of information, although subjective and emotional, can also be the basis for reconstructing the specific character and changes that took place in the field of preschool education in Łódź between 1924 and 1939.

## Organising preschool facilities

The research into the issue of preschool education in interwar Łódź shows that the immediate impulse for the local government to open its own public institution for preschool children in 1924 was the unsatisfactory level of the work of the social daycare centres despite the systematic supervision, methodological support and financing of the activities of these institutions by the Department of Education and Culture of the Łódź City Board (Polish abbreviation: WOiK) (Sosnowska, 2019b, pp. 35–38). The deficiencies mainly concerned the infrastructure and equipment of the facilities, the salaries and professional qualifications of the teachers, the working methods, and the quality of childcare. Another reason for the intensified, but somewhat belated, efforts for preschool education undertaken from the mid-1920s by the municipal school authorities was undoubtedly the success achieved in the field of education: Łódź was the first city in Poland to introduce universal education (Księga..., 1930, pp. 122–126). Thus, it was only after the completion of work related to the implementation of compulsory education that “preschool matters” could find their proper place among the socio-educational tasks of the local government. The extension of preschool care to children from working-class environments was, at the same time, a part of the implementation of left-wing programme slogans and the modernisation processes of the Polish state (Nartonowicz-Kot, 2001).

As it was already mentioned, the year 1924 was a turning point in the development of preschool education in Łódź as it was then that the number of kindergartens established by the municipal government began to systematically increase. After more than a decade, there were 14 municipal kindergartens putting into practice the ideas of the New Education. Although the worldwide economic crisis of 1929–1933, whose effects were felt above all in large cities with a dominance of industrial production, prevented the establishment of other public kindergartens (the last were organised at the end of the interwar period), the implementation of educational and childcare tasks in the already existing facilities was evidence of both the educational authorities’ and the staff’s understanding of the essence of pedagogical work with the child. In 1936 Pawłowska wrote: “the Municipal Board of Łódź appreciates the educational and social values of kindergartens and attempts to expand the network of municipal kindergartens as far as it is financially possible”, but “the intensification of the needs of the preschool child coincided in the city of Łódź with a period of financial crisis and, as a consequence, with the inhibition of the development of a further network of municipal kindergartens” (1936/37, pp. 183, 184; Szczepańska, 2002, p. 127).

Local government kindergartens did not meet the needs of a city of half a million inhabitants in which the number of preschool-age children in 1934 was 33.680 and, during the next five years, remained basically unchanged (Pawłowska, 1935,

p.614–615; 1936/37, p.184). Thus, the places offered for the youngest inhabitants of Łódź by non-public institutions cooperating with the Department of Education and Culture were used. Therefore, from the mid-1920s onwards, the organisation of conditions for the normalisation of preschool education in Łódź included two scopes of activity: the local government of Łódź opened its own kindergartens in various parts of the city (with particular emphasis on the peripheral districts with impoverished working-class population), and provided the community kindergartens with a monthly subsidy for the wages of educators and food for children. In the school year 1936/1937, the subsidy was paid to 18 out of 30 community kindergartens (Pawłowska, 1936/37, p. 184).

In 1924, in addition to the first day-care centre-kindergarten, two other preschools were established. The following years saw further development of the network of kindergartens organised by the municipal government<sup>4</sup>. The last, fourteenth public kindergarten was opened in 1937 (*Samorząd...*, 1938, p. 92). However, the overwhelming number of preschool children attended community facilities co-financed by the city.

A decade later (1924–1934) in Łódź there were 59 municipal kindergartens and kindergartens cooperating with the city. They provided day care to 2.908 children: 13 public institutions were attended by 825 children, 28 community kindergartens by 1.753, and 18 private kindergartens by 330 pupils (Table 1). But of the 33.680 preschool children in Łódź in 1933/1934, only 8.6% attended kindergartens. In the following years this rate, despite a slight increase in the number of municipal and private kindergartens, did not change for the better. Statistics provided by Pawłowska show that in the school year 1936/1937 there were 66 institutions: 14 municipal kindergartens, 30 community kindergartens and 22 private kindergartens; with a total number of 1.684 pupils (Table 1).

<sup>4</sup> Data concerning municipal day-care centres-kindergartens (with the number of institutions and teachers employed in them) – see Sosnowska, 2019a.

Table 1. Kindergartens in Łódź in 1933/1934 and 1936/1937

Kindergartens, children, teachers	Status of the kindergarten/school year							
	Public		Community		Private		Total in the school year	
	1933/1934	1936/1937	1933/1934	1936/1937	1933/1934	1936/1937	1933/1934	1936/1937
Kindergartens	13	14	28	30	18	22	59	66
Children	825	865	1753	1684	330	345	2908	2894
Teachers	b.d.	25	b.d.	48	b.d.	28	b.d.	101

n. d. – no data

Source: the author's own work based on: Pawłowska, 1935, pp. 614–615; 1936/37, p. 184.

In 1937, with reference to institutions managed by private people, Pawłowska wrote: “There are relatively few kindergartens in Łódź. In recent years, a considerable number of them have been liquidated as a result of poor attendance of children<sup>5</sup>. Poor attendance in private kindergartens is explained by rather high fees (from 15 to 40 PLN) which parents, succumbing to the general crisis, are not able to pay. Private kindergartens in the city of Łódź are in 75% owned by Jews” (1936/37, p. 184).

Community facilities were considerably cheaper: the monthly fee for a child in 1935 was 3–8 zloty. For 30 such kindergartens, the leading entities were religious organisations, military units, party organisations or associations. In Pawłowska's opinion, such a diverse network of running bodies caused the dispersion of care and educational tasks, hindering pedagogical work, but it also contributed to the segregation of children. Addressing the local press readers, she asked: “The question arises as to whether it is advisable to make such a social and professional selection already at an early age? Does this segregation not have a negative impact on the development of general human concepts in the youngest children? If the new School Act [of 1932] provides for the consolidation of a uniform comprehensive school, it will also be consistent to organise a uniform network of kindergartens for children of all social classes” (1935, p. 615). It is worth emphasising, however, that non-public kindergartens, in

<sup>5</sup> The inspector spoke about the general number of private kindergartens (there were about 50 of them), including those which – for various reasons – have not established a substantive cooperation with WOiK

the absence of public kindergartens, assisted the Łódź local government in organising access to preschool education for the youngest.

Matters of the organisation of preschool education in Łódź were the responsibility of the Department of Education and Culture in which the function of the municipal inspector, as mentioned, was entrusted to Pawłowska. In the 1930s, the Department of Kindergarten Education was separated in the structure of this unit, which reflected the interest in matters of kindergarten education among the authorities. Pawłowska became the head of the department. The new unit took over tasks related to the establishment of public kindergartens and the control of their activities, but the manager also supervised the general organisational level and pedagogical work of the kindergartens cooperating with WOiK (Pawłowska, 1935, p. 615). “The Department of Education – informed the manager – is an institution in the area of Łódź that brings together people working with and interested in the preschool child” (1936/37, p. 185). The unit had a library of publications on the pedagogy of preschool age, provided counselling on the organisation and equipment of the kindergarten, the furnishing of the premises or methods of working with the child, and mediated in finding employment for unemployed kindergarten teachers. The living conditions of children from municipal institutions were studied and the developmental achievements of the pupils at a later stage of education were monitored (Pawłowska, 1935/36a, pp. 198–199). Public kindergarten institutions did not charge for the child’s stay, as it was believed that kindergarten, like a general school, should be free of charge.

## Reorganisation of premises and equipment

The first kindergartens established by the local government in Łódź did not meet many housing and sanitary requirements; they were located in premises leased from private tenement house owners and were hardly able to provide conditions for the performance of care, education and teaching tasks. Difficulties were also noted in the provision of preschool facilities with furniture, equipment and teaching aids, since, at that time, the Department of Education and Culture made the provision of facilities dependent on the financial situation of the city and the political “atmosphere” within the local government. During the period when the left-wing parties were in power, there were definitely more favourable conditions for the management of units which organised activities for children (especially units with a social profile). It is worth noting that it was the representatives of the local government of the second term (1923–1927), representing right-wing and centre parties in Łódź, who fulfilled the idea of opening public kindergartens in the city, but in the years 1924–1926 the subsidies provided to social and private kindergartens were limited or even withdrawn (Sosnowska, 2020, p. 259–261).



The construction of their own premises for some kindergarten establishments began even before the economic crisis, and was completed between 1930 and 1934 (*Samorząd...*, 1938, p. 92). In April 1937, in the pages of “Kindergarten”, Pawłowska asserted:

The premises and facilities of the municipal kindergartens are fully adapted to the needs of children and the hygiene requirements of preschool age: 4 kindergartens are located in their own municipal buildings next to public schools, 2 – in houses specially built for this purpose by private owners (the Municipal Board is a certain tenant), the remaining 8 in rented buildings. 9 municipal kindergartens have their own gardens (including one allotment garden) where children grow flowers and vegetables; the other 5 use nearby city parks (Pawłowska, 1936/37, p. 186).

Community kindergartens had more difficult housing conditions. In the school year 1936/1937, 11 kindergartens operated in their own buildings, 19 in rented premises. All private kindergartens were also located in rented premises.

The proper conditions for the organisational and methodological work of kindergartens were sought by the Łódź authorities in the best period of the city’s development, i. e. at the end of the 1920s. It was a time of dynamic development of education, culture and care, and of effective implementation of the local government’s socio-educational policy tasks (*Księga...*, 1930; Nartowicz-Kot, 1985). With adequate financial resources, knowledge and experience, Pawłowska, as a representative of the educational authorities, strove to ensure that municipal and community kindergartens improved their facilities and modernised pedagogical work. Renovations were carried out in several public facilities (stove work, glazing, painting, carpentry and modernization of sanitary equipment). In response to the recommendations of the time (Żukiewiczowa, 1933/34, pp. 23–26), kindergarten rooms were painted in bright colours with children’s motifs. Implementing innovative methods of education, taking into account “the needs and conveniences of childhood”, tables and chairs suitable for the height of pupils, new equipment, toys and teaching aids, were purchased (Pawłowska, 1935, p. 615). Cloakrooms were equipped with hangers and shelves for shoes. Particular attention was paid to the durability, aesthetics and safety of furniture, e. g. the edges and legs of table tops and chair seats were rounded and polished. The inspector also motivated the governing bodies of non-public kindergartens to make changes. “In the social day-care centres”, Pawłowska reported in 1928, “some positive changes have been introduced; the way of conducting classes is also being changed thanks to the fact that the kindergarten management boards are supplying the kindergarten teachers with more teaching aids, and in some places benches have been thrown out and replaced with tables and chairs” (1928b, p. 35).

Among the materials used to equip the public and community institutions were tools for keeping the classrooms clean and tidy, stationery and craft supplies, teaching aids, Montessori developmental material for training the senses: sight, hearing, touch, hearing and smell, blocks and toys, sport equipment, percussion instruments or gardening tools (Sosnowska, 2019a, pp. 399–400). Many teaching aids were designed and made by female educators. According to the inspector: “These aids, taking into account modern trends in the method of preschool education, complement each other and stimulate children to self-education” (Pawłowska, 1936/37, p.188). A library with children’s and specialist literature was established in each public facility. In the kindergarten gardens children grew flowers and vegetables.

## Children of city kindergartens

Informing readers of the magazine “Przedszkole” about the realities of children’s lives in a large industrial environment, Pawłowska argued:

Łódź is one of the centres most in need of educational care for the preschool child. The large industrial city employs a great number of mothers, factory workers, so it requires redoubled vigilance over the young child. Kindergarten for the child in Łódź is becoming a life necessity. The awareness of parents – especially young people – of the aims and tasks of a modern kindergarten is becoming increasingly strong (Pawłowska, 1936/37, p. 183).

It should be emphasised that in the interwar period a specific feature of Łódź working families was the high proportion of women/mothers employed in industrial plants (Wachowska, 1976, pp. 48–50). During the years of crisis, it was women, receiving lower wages than men, who remained in the majority of jobs. A considerable problem of family life was ensuring the safety of younger children, especially when both parents worked the same hours during the day. The care of several-year-olds was usually entrusted to the immediate family or to a non-working neighbour. Elder children spent time at home or in the courtyard, left completely unattended by adults (Nowacki, 1939, pp. 19–20). Due to the difficult financial situation of families, few children were able to attend day-care centres/kindergartens. Poor working-class families could not afford to pay for a place in a community or factory institution (even when the fee was waived, the problem was the lack of footwear or clothing). There were also those parents who either did not attach importance to the preschool education of their children or did not send them to preschool for other reasons. The occupational structure of the parents of children attending kindergartens in Łódź in the school year 1928/29 was as follows: out of a total of 2028 pupils – 970 were children

of workers, 153 – of unemployed, 420 – of craftsmen, 174 – of white-collar workers, 78 – of small merchants, 57 – of army and police officers, 67 – of parents of various professions (*Wychowanie przedszkolne...*, 1929, p. 566).

It is significant that, while as late as the mid-1920s a rather distrustful attitude towards municipal kindergartens persisted among mothers of preschool-age children (Rydzewska, 1935/36, pp. 131–135), a completely different situation was recorded after several years of kindergartens' operation in Łódź (Pawłowska, 1935, p. 616). In 1929, the influx of children into the city's institutions was so great that in many of them the number of applications during recruitment exceeded the availability of places several times. "On the enrolment day", Pawłowska announced, "parents often wait from 5 o'clock in the morning to be the first on the list" (1929, p. 734). With the number of applications far exceeding the capacity of the public kindergartens, the selection of applications was decided. Pawłowska explained: "Unfortunately, the lack of a sufficient number of kindergartens creates great difficulties in enrolling children. To remedy this, the Department of Preschool Education was forced to create certain standards for the admission of children to the city's kindergartens. Thus, priority is given to orphans and children of unemployed parents, then to children whose both parents are employed outside the home, and finally to children who are candidates for school in the next school year" (1936/37, p. 185).

During the years of economic crisis, the importance of preschool institutions increased, which, as part of the social care of the child, became a place for the feeding of pupils from families in which the adults were deprived of work or worked only 2–3 days a week. Some improvement in the living situation of working families was noted at the end of the interwar period, when the number of parents deprived of work decreased in favour of families in which both parents worked (Table 2).

Table 2. Material status of parents of children from public kindergartens in Łódź (1933–1937)

School year	Total No. of children	Children of unemployed parents			Children whose parents:	
		who received unemployment benefit	without benefit	total	worked 2–3 days a week	both worked
1933/1934	902	62	133	195	117	208
1934/1935	921	80	154	234	105	228
1935/1936	933	104	69	173	96	265
1936/1937	923	66	84	150	75	275

The author's work based on: *Samorząd...*, 1938, p. 94.

The diagnosis of children's living conditions carried out since the 1930s by the Department of Preschool Education in municipal institutions and institutions co-financed by the city showed that the overwhelming number of children attending them belonged to the poorest social classes. Using a questionnaire survey, data was obtained on the age of the pupils, gender, religion and home conditions. In the school year 1935/1936, the number of children attending municipal and social institutions was 2142. The number of Roman Catholic pupils was 1822; Jewish pupils – 171, Evangelical pupils – 122, pupils of other faiths – 27. The home conditions of the children were as follows: 1399 children lived in a one-room flat, 567 -in a two-room flat, 152 – in a three-room flat, 18 – in a four-room flat, and 6 – in a five-room flat. Only 627 children (30%) had their own bed (Pawłowska, 1936/37, p. 186).

In the inspector's opinion, the preschool facilities, although not in a direct way, had a positive impact on minors who did not find a place in them. This was evidenced by the encounters of preschool children, who were "full of initiative", with their peers when, in the common courtyard, "they encourage their neighbours to play with them" (1935/36c, p. 166). In her search for other elements testifying to the importance of preschool education in the development of the youngest, Pawłowska pointed to facilities organised in areas hitherto devoid of them. This is how she presented her observations on the subject to the readers of "*Przedszkole*" [*Kindergarten*]:

I have also noticed a big difference in the work with children in a kindergarten organised in a district of the city where previously there was no kindergarten. In the first years, the work of the kindergarten teachers was far more burdensome, not only for the children, but also for the parents. The children were noisy, unruly and dirty, and the parents were often hostile. After several years of kindergarten in the same district, the newly entering children are much more cultured and less noisy, the parents more trusting. This fact is one more among many testifying to the cultural mission that the kindergarten has to fulfil in the society (Pawłowska, 1935/36c, p. 166).

## Changes in the approach to the aims and tasks of preschool education

In view of the organisational and methodological transformations that took place in Łódź kindergartens in the interwar period, the most significant changes can be recorded in the field of educational and didactic work and in the personnel sphere: in the understanding of the kindergarten's mission, in the subjective approach to the child, in respecting his/her needs and developmental possibilities, in planning and organising daily games and activities, in improving the pedagogical work of female educators and in the quality of contacts with parents.

In the mid-1930s, i.e. from the perspective of a dozen years of preschool education in Łódź, Pawłowska wrote in this way about the aims and tasks of preschool institutions:

[...] the kindergarten is seen as a transition link between the child's carefree life at home and future planned work at school. This is where the educational methods of the family home overlap with pedagogical expertise. Thus, the task of the kindergarten is to combine these two elements as closely as possible in order to provide the young child with a suitable environment and training ground for the methodical development of the self-educational tendencies that have been present since earliest childhood. Our primary aim is to develop the child's independence and resourcefulness, to cultivate his or her manners and to strengthen his or her emerging individuality. The kindergarten puts the activity of the child into a certain framework, giving it an outlet in a series of games, plays and methodical exercises (Pawłowska, 1936/37, p.187).

The working methods and forms of the Łódź kindergartens were based on the standards in preschool education in Poland of the interwar period, set by the aforementioned promoters of preschool education. According to one of the slogans of the New Education, which defined the school environment as the "school of life" or a "living school", the kindergarten was to be a place of free, creative work of its pupils. The child's activity during classes was to be adapted to his or her developmental capabilities and stem from his or her interest in the immediate environment: the social and natural environment. In kindergartens in Łódź, one of the methods of working with the child, promoted by the inspector of the WOiK, consisted in free choice of activities and teaching aids. She explained to the readers:

In this, we follow the method of Montessori<sup>6</sup> who, in one of her works, rightly states: <It is impossible for 30 preschool children to concentrate their scattered attention on one common activity, directed by the educator>. We avoid this absurdity by leaving the child completely free to choose the activity or exercise on the teaching material. We wish to rely on the child's instinctive drive for self-education, using it for educational purposes (Pawłowska, 1936/37, p. 187).

The role of the educator working with this method was to "skilfully suggest to the child appropriate external stimuli (didactic and sport instruments, exercises, games), to synthesise disjointed knowledge, and to plan observation of the children's immediate environment" (Pawłowska, 1936/37, p. 188).

Already at that time, the organisational and methodological solutions for the place of children's activities during their stay in the kindergarten were interesting.

<sup>6</sup> The Ministry of Religious Denominations and Public Enlightenment introduced the Montessori method in public seminars for teachers/educators in kindergartens in 1929 (Czerwiński, 1929/30, p. 6).

Six-person tables replacing heavy, clumsy benches, were treated as “workshops” and arranged in the room so that access was free. Exercises with Montessori and Decroly developmental material and other aids, such as puzzles and jigsaws, took place on rugs spread out on the floor or at small individual tables [similar to today’s Montessori kindergartens]. “In this way the children do not disturb each other and have the opportunity to concentrate more”, the inspector explained (Pawłowska, 1936/37, p. 188).

Common working methods included talks (on moral-ethical, religious, natural, historical, patriotic topics), stories, learning poems and songs, building with blocks, sculpting, drawing, cutting out. On Pawłowska’s initiative, kindergarten pupils visited the Municipal Educational Cinema (Pawłowska, 1928a, p. 27). Walks to the park, outdoor excursions and trips to workplaces were very popular. A new form of activity involving the child was growing plants both in the classrooms and in the kindergarten gardens. During spring and autumn, children spent almost all their time outdoors, working on their plots in the kindergarten garden, playing and sculpting in the sand, exercising on the playground, and dressing up in sport costumes when the weather was good (Pawłowska, 1936/37, p. 188).

Working in a “modern” kindergarten required female educators to systematically improve their methodological and professional skills. This goal was achieved by further training of the educational staff, systematically (and “strenuously”), which was organised by the inspector since 1928 (Pawłowska, 1936/37, p. 188). It is worth mentioning that she began her work at the WOiK with a visit to public and community kindergartens, and her inspection of the latter showed that although the kindergarten teachers worked “conscientiously” and had “a lot of good will, their general lack is ignorance of new educational methods which, above all, take into account the child’s free and creative work” (Pawłowska, 1928a, p. 20). At the same time, Pawłowska formulated reservations about the organisation of pedagogical work in some places: preschool departments were treated like school classes, and educational methods were “routine and schematic, and no account was taken of the child’s individual and independent work, which should be in the foreground in a kindergarten” (1928a, p. 25). Not surprisingly, she set about rebuilding this sphere of the Łódź kindergartens’ activities with impetus as well. Over the course of almost a decade (1928–1936), the educational authorities organised various types of courses aimed at “giving a creative impulse to educators in this field of work which became too routine or required some improvement” (Pawłowska, 1936/37, p. 189). In the years 1928–1930, a free six-month course was conducted, covering issues of psychology, child hygiene, pedagogy, the methodology of preschool education (music, singing, games and play, moulding, drawing, cutting out), history of culture and art, reading and knowledge of contemporary Poland (*Prace samorządu...*, 1931, p. 668). This was followed by lectures on

methodological issues, a course in rational child nutrition, workshops in rhythmic, sports and music.

The level of pedagogical activity in Łódź kindergartens was set by methodological conferences regularly organised for female kindergarten teachers from municipal and community kindergartens. Current issues of preschool establishments were discussed, knowledge and practice were shared. In turn, “appreciating the formative influence of becoming familiar with the activities of childcare institutions”, visits to various institutions and childcare facilities were made possible, also in Warsaw. Teaching staff also visited mainstream schools to attend lessons and watch the graduates. “The tour”, the inspector explained, “was intended to emphasize the impact of the kindergarten on the children’s progress and behaviour” (1936/37, p. 189).

In the interwar period, the concept of cooperation between schools and kindergartens and the family was particularly popular. The inclusion of the parents of pupils in cooperation for the benefit of the child was to be the way to socialise education and activate adults (Jakubiak, 1997, p. 102). In order to integrate the environment of parents and teachers, parent organisations were created. The body bringing together parents of school pupils and parents of preschool children was Parent’s Care [Opieka Rodzicielska]. From the publications in “Przedszkole” it appeared that the issue of the involvement of parents for the welfare and development of the child was quite common. “Local government kindergartens in Łódź”, Pawłowska wrote, “appreciate the educational and social values of cooperation with the parents of children attending kindergartens, understanding that a 5- or 6-hour stay of a child in the educational environment of a kindergarten would not yield the expected results unless it overlapped with the home interaction of the parents” (1935/36b, p.135). She believed that the “bridge” between the educator/teacher and the family home was the child himself/herself, and it was the child who could be the vehicle for positive change in the home environment: “Through the child one must be able to reach and influence the parents. The cultural level of the children and their requirements are increasing considerably in modern kindergartens in Łódź, which forces the parents to correct some of their habits and negligence” (1935/36b, p.136). The successful cooperation of the kindergarten with the family home of the pupils was seen, as mentioned, in the activity of the Parental Care, because: “this organisation becomes for the mothers and fathers of the children a school of civic work, as well as educational and social consciousness” (Pawłowska, 1935/36b, p.135). The teaching staff tried to initiate this kind of contact between the kindergarten and the family home in every urban kindergarten.

Popular forms of cooperation between teachers and parents included periodically organised meetings, talks and lectures (presentations of papers on hygienic, health and pedagogical needs of preschool children, as well as teaching aids and exhibitions of children’s works). A new form (but used irregularly), were open classes for parents

organised in the kindergarten and visiting pupils at home. The latter type of contact with the child's family was intended to learn about the atmosphere and conditions of the pupil's home environment or to provide educational guidance to parents/guardians. Home visits were a rather debatable form of cooperation, because while "children are usually very happy to be visited by <their ladies> from the kindergarten", "parents react in different ways", considering this type of contact as a sign of control or, on the contrary, as proof of favouring a child (Pawłowska, 1935/36c, p.137). Quite willingly, parents took part in exhibitions of teaching aids and products of children's work in the kindergartens.

There is no doubt that the mother was more involved in the care and upbringing of her children and it was she who was more often in contact with the educators. But a certain change in the relationship between home and kindergarten was noticed in the mid-1930s. Analysing the attitudes of parents of children attending kindergartens in Łódź, the head of the Department of Preschool Education came to the following conclusion:

In recent years, I have noticed a certain intensification of paternal feelings. Young fathers are taking a deeper interest in the life and upbringing of their children and are often fulfilling many activities that were previously considered to be the special area and duty of mothers. This phenomenon manifests itself in all spheres and can be seen in both Christian and Jewish kindergartens. It can partly be explained by the issue of unemployment and the mother's employment outside the home. Often the father has already been unemployed for a few years, while the mother is still working. However, I think the reason needs to be sought deeper. In recent years the number of children in working-class families has been decreasing considerably, and consequently the attachment of fathers to their children is increasing. The child ceases to be one of many, and becomes the centre of family life, an individual in whom the father takes an interest (34% of kindergarten pupils in Łódź are only children) (Pawłowska, 1935/36b, p. 136).

Preschool facilities also included preventive and health care tasks for the child in the scope of their work. This aspect of kindergartens' activities was of exceptional importance in a metropolitan environment with a large number of industrial workers. The terrible sanitary condition of Łódź at that time, the density of urban development and the lack of sewage systems were the reasons for the development of diseases and the cause of high mortality rates, especially in low-income families (Pawłowska, 1928a, p. 23; 1933/34, pp. 141–145), and, as we read in "Przedszkole": "the hard financial conditions of the working classes and the employment of the mothers force the parents of small [frail] children to seek help in the kindergarten, where, in addition to methodical upbringing, the child of indigent parents receives various benefits in the form of food, cod-liver oil, clothing, and summer camps" (Pawłowska, 1936/37, p. 183).



## Conclusion

A description of the experiences, observations, difficulties, but, above all, the results of the many undertakings in which Pawłowska was involved in Łódź in the interwar period can be found in the sources such as the magazine “Przedszkole” (*Kindergarten*) and the “Dziennik Zarządu Miasta Łodzi” (*Journal of the Board of the City of Łódź*). Although the period of intensive work of the inspector of the Department of Education and Culture falls on the turn of the 1920s/30s, her publications still make it possible for us to learn about the issues dominating in the field of preschool education in the period under study (1924–1939).

The analysis of the periodicals allows us to express a view that, first, it was a time of dynamic transformations, changes and development of preschool institutions in many aspects of functioning (at the level of structure and organisation, equipment, strategy of pedagogical work or in the personal layer: pupils – teachers – family); second, beneficial changes could take place thanks to Pawłowska’s commitment and vision of preschool education, which she presented, also in the pages of the above-mentioned periodicals. However, the development of preschool education took place under complicated economic and social conditions, with the people of Łódź facing the effects of the economic crisis, lack of employment and money. It can be assumed that, if it had not been for the worldwide, national and local economic crisis, the achievements in the field of education initiated by the city authorities after the restoration of independence could have had a much greater scope. This makes it all the more important to appreciate the work that was undertaken at that time on the wave of socio-educational transformations.

To sum it up, significant changes that have taken place in Łódź kindergartens since the mid-1920s were recorded at the material, upbringing and didactic, and personnel levels; however, they were most noticeable in work with the child and his/her family. In line with innovative pedagogical solutions, existing kindergartens were modernised and new ones were established. Kindergartens were equipped with modern teaching aids, the quality of educational work was improved, further education was made possible, and new forms of cooperation with parents were undertaken. It is worth mentioning that Pawłowska – not without difficulties – tried to consolidate the educational environment of municipal and community/private kindergartens, and this was a very important issue in a multi-faith city like Łódź.

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