

SECONDARY EDUCATION IN POLAND (1945-1995) PROBLEMS OF EXPANSION AND CHANGE

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INTRODUCTION

In Poland, as in other western civilized countries, secondary education has been most rewarding of all segments of the formal school system. It has served as an educational ladder that has led to higher levels of social strata. Giving opportunity and preferment, it has enjoyed esteem among both higher and lower classes of society. Secondary schools, known by various names — "gymnasiums", "lyceums", "middle schools", "high schools"— were usually eight or at least six-year grammar schools offering courses of general knowledge the completion of which was a minimum condition for admission to a university.

In the last half century secondary education in Poland has changed its intellectual image and social function. Today it provides general or specialized instruction based upon at least eight-year's previous education at the first level of the school system and is divided into two types of institutions: "...and is divided into two types of institutions: general secondary schools and vocational secondary schools [Fig. 1]".

Due to the redevelopment of the social, economic and political structures of the country, these types of schools recently became a central issue of educational reform. Hence, it is interesting to raise questions concerning their historical development from the mid-1940s to the present day, namely, what were the main stages of expansion of secondary education in Poland; what was an ideological background for forming secondary education during both the communist and post-communist periods?; what role has been attached to secondary schools in terms of a vehicle of the social, political and economic development; why has secondary education caused inequality of access to education at higher levels of the educational ladder; what are the predominant symptoms of current secondary education structural and curricular reform? These questions offer an overview of representative problems in secondary education development during the last half century. In general, they have been typical not only of the Polish nation but also common to other societies in Central and Eastern Europe.

1. PURPOSES

The mid-1940s ushered in a new period of education in Poland (1). The ending of the second World War and the introduction of a new political system became challenges for more consideration and energy to be devoted to education. One of the first and foremost tasks of education policy was to overcome the devastating losses which occurred during the War. Over three thousand Polish secondary

school teachers were missing or killed during the Nazi or Soviet occupation. Together with thirteen thousand elementary school teachers who were lost during the War, it constituted 35 per cent of all teaching staff. School buildings were destroyed or devastated by 30-50 per cent, school furniture in c. 70 per cent, classrooms and educational equipment in c. 90 per cent, and school libraries in c. 95 per cent (2).

In this light, the post-war period in the history of Polish secondary schools can, without exaggeration, be called a time of heroic efforts. Goals set before the reform of that type of formal education system crystallized gradually together with changes being realized in economic and social life. Developing the economic structure was a central issue. This required a work force capable of meeting demands for building the industrial society. According to official documents secondary schools should engraft into students' minds a new attitude towards work — 'liberated from the fetters of capitalist exploitation'— that was henceforth to serve the entire society. Educational reform was to strive towards the school that offered the most complete mental and physical development of students who were to achieve a high level of knowledge and professional skills. Also they were to be trained to participate creatively in social life within a range corresponding to individual abilities as well as cultural and economic needs of the society (3).

In assessing the country's post-war educational transformation, it should be pointed out that to most contemporary political leaders and many educators the education reform was designed to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of schooling in respect to the formation of a new socialist personality. A shift from an individual oriented to a collective oriented education seemed to be an imperative task of the formal education system. Society at different times and in different places, it was affirmed, has idealized a saint, a scholar, a merchant, a soldier, and its educational practice has adapted itself to each ideal in turn. Socialist ideal was a collectivist one; the good, the beautiful, the true were so only when the point of reference was a group, not an individual (4). Against a background of the collectivist ideal the theory and practice of education were being measured and tested. The extreme view of that educational orientation assumed that the 'good life' was the life that was useful to a group, hence no educational material was satisfactory if it was self alone. It is worth mentioning that nowadays that assumption has become a subject of very intense critical judgment.

One of the most important tasks set before secondary

- (1) MAUERSBERG, STANISLAW (1974). *Reforma szkolnictwa w Polsce w latach 1944-1948* (School reform in Poland in 1944-1948). Wrocław. Ossolineum, pp. 16-71.
- (2) *Materiały sprawozdawcze z działalności Ministerstwa Oświaty w okresie od lipca 1944 r. do grudnia 1946 r. (1948)* [Account materials of the Ministry of Education activity in July 1944-December 1946]. Warszawa, pp. 56-57.
- (3) Instrukcja z dnia 16 lipca 1945 roku w sprawie organizacji r.szk. 1945/46 w średnich szkołach ogólnokształcących (Ministry of Education directions of July 16, 1945 on the 1945/46 school-year organization in general secondary schools). In: PECHERSKI, MIECZYSLAW AND SWIATEK, MACIEJ (eds, 1978). *Organizacja oświaty w Polsce w latach 1917-1977. Podstawowe akty prawne*. Warszawa. PWN, pp. 244-245.
- (4) SKRZESZEWSKI, STANISLAW (1945). O nową szkole w nowej Polsce (For a new school in a new Poland). *Nowa Szkoła*, n.º 3 (July).

schools required the removal of centuries old neglect in the participation of peasants 'and workers' masses in the cultural life. It was therefore necessary that education be made accessible to all levels of working classes by removing the barriers barring peasant and worker children from admittance to secondary and higher education. The idea of provision of secondary education for all youth was the primary issue of all education reform activities (5). However, that idea remained wishful thinking. By the 1960s, 1970s and especially 1980s numerous sociopolitical and economic changes had occurred domestically and internationally which impacted the Polish education system and imposed the stagnation within the structure of secondary education. Crises of the communist state, political instability, ideological obstacles, economic stagnation, direct dependence on the Soviet Union, and finally, increasing and in the case of the communist system, destructive demands of the society to participate more fully in the control process — all those phenomena were serious impediments to the dissemination of secondary education.

The post-war political situation required not only an ideological reorientation of secondary education but also a merging of a new style of patriotic education and shaping of internationalistic attitudes of the youth. It was believed that rejection of nationalistic taints and prejudices as well as anachronistic myths about Poland being the 'bulwark of Christianity' or the 'great power' aspirants of pre-war Poland, should be overcome by the provision of certain knowledge on historical and contemporary political circumstances of the nation. One of the primary purposes of secondary education was the strengthening of the nation's cultural unity and the integration of the Polish population. A considerable part of that population was removed after the War from former eastern territories to western ones thereby changing its social environment. That is why the reform activists insisted that formal education be part and parcel of that indispensable process (6).

Finally, to the list of purposes of secondary education which were dependent on time and political or ideological circumstances, must be added historically familiar goals such as preparation for university studies, mental discipline, qualities of students' mind and heart, etc. According to the 1961 school-law secondary schools had to fulfil tasks that would satisfy immediate and probable future needs of students insofar as the maturity of the learner permits, guiding the behaviour of youth in the light of increasingly remote but always clearly perceived social and personal values. On the basis of courses and other information gathered from personal studies schools should guide students into wholesome social relationships and advanced study or vocations in which they would perform successfully for the sake of socialist society and for their own happiness (7).

In general, the major goals of secondary schools were to establish basic academic knowledge and skills, inculcate ideological values and develop attitudes leading to socially useful work (8). These goals summarize in brief and integrated form the main developments that had occurred in the theory and practice of secondary education during the whole period of communist domination in the country.

2. STRUCTURE AND CURRICULUM

At the time of the communist and Soviet predomination over Poland, economic development, although ineffective and relatively limited, had generated revolutionary changes in the country's social structure. Thanks to industrialization, differences in the level of development of Poland's various regions has been greatly reduced. Accordingly this has led to a more balanced distribution of the working force and the strengthening of social bonds. Furthermore, industrialization and urbanization increased horizontal social mobility (9). As a result, higher living standards of the rural population, much speedier flow of information, advances in the culture of the working class and equal educational opportunities had progressively appeared. In the course of those social changes two sorts of secondary schools had played one of the distinctive roles.

a. General secondary school

Until 1948 in Poland there was, in fact, a valid school system, which was established in 1932. This provided for the general secondary school to be divided into a four-year grammar school ("gymnasium") and following it as its superstructure, a senior two-year supplementary grammar school ("lyceum") (10). During the years 1944-1948 some significant departures from that structure were actually made. First of all, the very ideological image of the school until then expressed Christian or rather Roman Catholic orientation. This was changed. The school has steadily been secularized and equalized, owing to an increased enrolment of the youth the worker and peasant origin.

In the first half of 1948 the basis for a structural reform of the formal education system was worked out in accordance with the consistently implemented educational policy of the socialist state. Within the wide-ranging activities in this area the Ministry of Education issued directions on the organization of the 1948/49 schools of general education (11). The two-degree secondary school structure was abolished by liquidating the former "gymnasium"; its two lower grades were merged with elementary schools and two higher - with the former "lyceum", i.e. supplementary grammar school. As a result, a two degree, eleven-year general education structure was established. The first degree included a seven-year basic elementary school and the second degree a four-year general secondary school. The main purpose of this reform was to reshape education in the country in the spirit of socialist education. Its new structure was, therefore, so designed as to give the school of general education more uniform structure and to bring it closer to the tasks of building and strengthening equal educational opportunities. It was the intention of the reform that the new profile of the school was to alter social awareness by making it more rationalistic and also attempting to influence students' personalities in a more complex way. That tendency found its practical expression in the new syllabuses for all subjects, drawn up in 1949.

The next structural school reform took place in 1961. By virtue of the law passed by the Parliament the four-year secondary school was to cater to the general and polytechnic education. As a rule, it was designed for students who

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- (5) OKON, WINCENTY (1979). *Szkola współczesna. Przemiany i tendencje rozwojowe* (Contemporary school. Changes and tendencies of development). Warszawa. PWN, pp. 74 nn.
- (6) FALSKI, MARIAN (1966). *Problematyka organizacyjna szkolnictwa średnich szczebli* (Structural problems of the middle school). Wrocław. Ossolineum, pp. 48-57.
- (7) Ustawa z dnia 15 lipca 1961 roku o rozwoju systemu oświaty i wychowania (Law of July 15, 1961 on the development of the education system). In: PECHERSKI, M. and SWIATEK, M. (eds, 1978), *op. cit.*, pp. 284 and 287 nn.
- (8) Those goals have undoubtedly been taken over from the Soviet theory and practice of communist education. See: GUTEK, GERALD L. (1995). *A History of the Western Educational Experience*. Second Edition. Waveland Press, Inc. Prospect Heights, pp. 444-446.
- (9) TOPOLSKI, JERZY (1992). *Historia Polski* (History of Poland). Warszawa-Krakow. Poloczek, pp. 310 nn.
- (10) Ustawa z dnia 11 marca 1932 roku o ustroju szkolnictwa (Law of March 11, 1932 on the school system). In: WOŁOSZYN, STEFAN (ed. 1966) *Źródła do dziejów wychowania i myśli pedagogicznej*. Vol. III. Warszawa. PWN, pp. 341-352.
- (11) Instrukcja z dnia 4 maja 1948 roku w sprawie organizacji roku szkolnego 1948/49 w szkolnictwie ogólnokształcącym (Ministry of Education directions of May 4, 1948 on the 1948/49 school year organization in general education schools). In: PECHERSKI, M. and SWIATEK, M. (eds, 1978), *op. cit.*, pp. 249-251.

intended to be prepared for higher studies, hence it did not aim at training them directly for a given trade or occupation since its predominant task lay in getting prepared for university studies. It offered a school leaving certificate ("matura") that entitled one to apply for higher education entrance (12). In accordance with Marxian ideology, the school desired to provide some work experience for students so they could appreciate the proletarian basis of the society. It was a part of the polytechnic education which embraced both theoretical knowledge and practical training in a field the school specialized in, i.e. industry, agriculture or handicrafts. Practical training was an element of the secondary school education program designed to ensure a better knowledge of the problems of production and a fuller understanding of the significance of labour and also to ensure occupational preorientation.

The general secondary school was based on an eight-year elementary school. Its four-year course included subjects in the humanities, science, art, technology, physical education and defense training (13). Their curricula were highly structured along with core academic disciplines. Humanities embraced Polish, Russian (and the other optional foreign languages - English, French, German, Spanish), history and civics. They contained the traditional encyclopedic knowledge and emphasized a socialist or Marxist-Leninist perspective. Within the contents of the science subjects (mathematics, physics, astronomy, chemistry, biology and geography) priority was given to the broad standard knowledge furnishing the basis for a versatile development of personality, shaping a scientific view of the world and forming a materialistic outlook on life. The relevance of science disciplines to technology, industry and agriculture was also indicated as important. The general secondary school curriculum was completed by the other subjects, such as technical education that served as a means of polytechnic education, physical education, defense training. Options were music, fine arts and, introduced in 1980s, computer instruction (14). The curricula of the last group of subjects also stressed the substantial, encyclopedic aspect of school teaching and its educational purpose. Hence, in their subject matter some information about the people's struggle for social and civilizational progress can be found. It should be mentioned that the curriculum content and instruction were uniform and centrally standardized [Tab. 1].

Since the early 1970s both national education authorities and educators have constantly debated the radical structural and curricular reform of the whole school system (15). It was believed that the general secondary school could no longer cope with changes brought about by the scientific and technological revolutions, nor deal with the new role of formal education in modern society. That is why the project of educational reform had been drawn up at the end of the 1970s. It provided for essential alterations of the school system and at the same time the secondary school. However, due to the major political and economic obstacles which appeared in the 1980s that project was rejected. Therefore, since the reform of 1961, the school system in Poland has practically remained unchanged up to the present day. Even recent political and economic transforma-

tions did not cause any significant change in its structure.

b. Vocational secondary school

The idea of the close linkage of general education and vocational training was one of the predominant characteristics of the education reform in post-war Poland. The Socialist government saw vocational training as the necessary instrument in achieving the economic modernization of the country. That was just why vocational schools became an equal or even more important part of the secondary school structure. Regarding the growing demand for trained personnel in industry, vocational schools were considerably extended and soon embraced twice as many students as general secondary schools. Also their pre-war structure was changed. Instead of two-grade schools (vocational gymnasiums and lyceums), one-grade, uniform schools, called vocational lyceums (later on - technical secondary schools), were founded. At the same time lower or basic vocational schools and industrial preparatory schools were developing. They enabled rural and urban youth with elementary education to get employment and be trained for a profession, particularly in the industry. The third type of vocational school was founded in 1961. It was post-secondary vocational school designed for graduates of general secondary school (16).

According to the law of 1961 the aim of vocational schools was to show prospects for work at posts determined by the present and future structure of the society. The law emphasized the demand to furnish the basis for readjustment and improvement of qualifications in conditions of rapid technological and environmental changes caused by the development of science and technology. It also stressed the need of creating the opportunity for professional and social advancement according to the students' talents and interests (17). These tasks were mainly carried out by the above mentioned three types of vocational schools.

i. Lower vocational school

Lower vocational schools were based on the seven — and from 1961 the eight— year elementary school and offered either general education courses, theoretical vocational program and practical training in school workshops or/and enterprises. [Tab. 2] Initially, their course lasted two years but since the late of 1960s it was extended to three years to meet the growing demand of the industry for the higher skilled workers. Generally, they aimed at preparing the qualified work force for particular branches of the national economy.

There were two main types of lower vocational schools: for non-working youth with practical training in the school workshops and for young workers, attached to factories or institutions, with practical training in a working place. Both types were run by either the local authorities for the young who did not work and juvenile workers, and by factories and other enterprises as factory schools for juvenile workers (18).

The lower vocational school certificate confirmed an obtainment of education at the level of qualified manual worker and authorized to compete for an admission to a

(12) During the communist period about 18-22 per cent of the age group students attended general secondary schools. See: BANACH, CZESLAW; FILIPOWICZ, FRANCISZEK; KRYLA, WLADYSLAW (1987). *Education in the Polish People's Republic*. Warszawa. Interpress, pp. 14-17 [Fig. 2].

(13) Statut liceum ogólnokształcącego. Załącznik do zarządzenia Ministra Oświaty z dnia 12 października 1966 roku (General secondary school statutes. By-law to the Ministry of Education order of October 12, 1966). In: PECHERSKI, M. and SWIATEK, M. (eds, 1978), *op. cit.*, pp. 306-309.

(14) Instytut Programów Szkolnych (1973). *Plany nauczania ogólnokształcących szkół podstawowych i średnich w Polsce w latach 1919-1972* (Schedules of instruction in elementary and general secondary schools in Poland in 1919-1972). Warszawa-pp. 34-45.

(15) Komitet Ekspertów (1973). *Raport o stanie oświaty w PRL* (Report on the condition of education in Polish People's Republic). Warszawa. PWN; Komitet Ekspertów (1989). *Raport o stanie i kierunkach rozwoju edukacji narodowej w Polskiej Rzeczypospolitej Ludowej* (Report on the condition and the course of development of national education in Polish People's Republic). Warszawa. PWN.

(16) PECHERSKI, MIECZYSLAW (1981). *System oświatowy w Polsce Ludowej na tle porównawczym* (Education system in People's Poland against a comparative background). Wrocław. Ossolineum, pp. 195-202.

(17) Ustawa z dnia 15 lipca 1961 roku ... (Law of July 15, 1961 ...), *op. cit.*, p. 288.

(18) NOWACKI, TADEUSZ (1971). *Szkolnictwo zawodowe. Rozwój, zadania, perspektywy*. *Chowanna*, nr 2, pp. 88-92.

three-year general secondary school, technical secondary school or vocational lyceum which were organized as a continuation of the basic vocational program. However, not many of those who graduated from lower vocational schools continued their education. This reflected the social inequalities existing within the school system. After completion of the elementary school, about half of all age group students proceeded to lower vocational schools and in most cases, completing two —or three— year courses, ended their education [Fig. 3]. They were mainly of worker and peasant origin and constituted a reservoir of heavy industry labour force (19). In the main, until the late 1980s, this type of vocational school had constituted a major sector of the country secondary education structure. Since 1989 the number of both lower vocational schools and students attending them has distinctly decreased. Because of economic crisis and of national economy transformation, many factories and heavy industry enterprises refused to subsidize or maintain schools which, in fact, did not contribute to their effectiveness any more.

ii. Technical secondary school and vocational lyceum

The third type of post-elementary formal education in Poland was constituted by technical secondary schools and vocational lyceums. At the start, their course of study lasted three or four years but, as the need arose, in most cases the instruction was extended to five years. Recently, only a few types of these schools have a four-year course. They prepare qualified workers (technicians) or other future employees at general secondary school level for various branches of economy and culture. Their syllabi include general education disciplines, profession —and specialization— related subjects as well as practical training in school workshops and enterprises (20) [Tab. 3].

With regard to the basic general education disciplines, the area of instruction in technical secondary schools or vocational lyceums is the same or very similar to that in general secondary schools. The profession-related subjects vary, depending on the type of school, group of related vocations and specializations or even single professions. The curricula of that subject-group are built around the idea of forming a basis for learning of specialized subjects. They should enable the students to understand issues related to the progress in technology, to introduce them to technical and economic studies and to make it possible to adapt to new and constantly changing methods of work. The area of specialized vocational training comprises theoretical and practical instruction for a given profession. This is considered the most dynamic part of vocational training and as such requires frequent updating to keep up with the developments in engineering, technology and organization of production in various branches of the economy.

The graduates of technical secondary schools and vocational lyceums obtain the school certificate or certificate of maturity ("matura"). The first one is a document confirming an obtainment of secondary education and a given professional qualification. The graduate get the title of technician or the other title specified in the classification of professions and specialities. The certificate of maturity is also a document that authorizes to compete for an admission to the university studies. However, the graduates of these schools rarely apply for going on to higher education. It can be said that the higher teaching standards of these schools, especially in general education disciplines, the higher pro-

portion of their graduates who reveal the ambition to continue education.

In the last decades there was about 21-24 per cent of the age group elementary school leavers who continued their education in full secondary vocational schools. Of those only 15-19 per cent applied successfully to the institutions of higher education [Fig. 2].

iii. Post-secondary vocational school

Founded in 1961, the post-secondary schools or vocational colleges are designed for graduates of general secondary schools who for different reasons do not go on to higher education. They prepare candidates for particular occupations, either as skilled manual workers or their equivalent or white-collar employees in professions and specializations which require secondary vocational qualifications.

The length of training in post-secondary vocational schools depends on the profession as specified in the classification of occupations. It is provided for the possibility of arranging a one-year training in a couple of selected vocations. For the rest of them a two-year training is the standard requirement. In many cases the training in these schools is organized for those professions and specializations which have no other type of education provided. Their location and the scale of admissions depend on the needs of particular branches of the national or local economy and culture.

The post-secondary vocational schools syllabi contain a set of general vocational subjects, usually connected with one group of professions. In addition, they offer a large number of special courses of varying lengths which provide direct vocational preparation. Their program also includes some general education subjects which should give the students a larger outlook to their future work [Tab. 4]. The graduates of these schools obtain a certificate of successful completion of courses which confer the rank of skilled worker in a particular trade. Those who graduate from two-year studies for white-collar workers receive a certificate of secondary vocational education that confers the rank of technician or some other occupational title.

Usually, post-secondary vocational schools are attended by those of general secondary schools graduates who were not enrolled for university courses. In the 1980s it made over fifty per cent of the total number of those alum (21) [Fig. 4]. Moreover, these schools are populated by students who graduated from provincial general secondary schools with a relatively low standard of teaching. This testifies to the inequalities which appear in the Polish system of education.

3. SOME PREVALENT CHARACTERISTICS

The secondary education in Poland had actually been disseminated during the communist period. In 1987 only 12 thousand (about 5 per cent) of the total 506 thousand elementary school leavers did not take up learning at the secondary level (22). However, despite the rise in attendance of this sector of formal education, the inequalities in access to higher education have appeared. In particular, the access limitation were marked along urban-rural or social class lines. Although the socialist ideology stressed an equal educational opportunity, the advantage possessed by children from the intelligentsia origin over those from a peasant parentage clearly occurred. The socio-political system favoured educational development in cities, and so one could

(19) Ministry of National Education (1995). *Poland: Education in a Changing Society. Background Report for the OECD Review. A Short Version*. Warsaw [manuscript], p. 19.

(20) KACZOR, STANISLAW (1989). *Stan i perspektywy szkolnictwa zawodowego w Polsce* (Condition and perspective of the vocational schooling development in Poland). Warszawa. PWN, pp. 48-60.

(21) Ministry of National Education of the Polish People's Republic (1988). *Development of education within 1986-1988. Report for the International Education Office in Geneva for the 41st Session of the International Education Conference*. Warsaw (manuscript), p. 91.

(22) *Ibidem*, p. 81.

find sectors of the population with little opportunity to attend or to be successful in full secondary schools which offered the matura and as a consequence the entrance to higher education institutions.

Heavy tracking or selection for different categories of higher education was one of the main disadvantages for those who attended lower vocational schools or even for those who graduated from full secondary vocational schools. Relatively low standards of general education offered by those schools did not allow their graduates to be properly prepared for a difficult university entrance examination. Hence, those who were selected to vocational schools became at the same time likely to be sorted into non-elite schools or into institutions which channelled them to manual or blue-collar worker positions. It must be emphasized that over 70 per cent of every age group population was poorly provided with higher education opportunities, since it was ill-served in the institutions attended.

In the last few decades lower vocational schools and technical secondary schools have been excessively expanded. Since they are provided with less attractive options for the girls, the boys predominated their population. It was believed that technical or artisan occupations were much more appropriate for the boys while the girls would be rather predestinated for clerical, medical (nursing), teaching, commercial and similar professions. The side effect of that assumption was a considerable increase of the higher education opportunity for the girls who constituted a vast majority of the general secondary school students. That social phenomenon was not predicted by the policy makers, however, they unconsciously created a condition for overcoming the gender discrimination in the traditional sex role in the society.

For almost a half century the system of education in Poland was generally characterized by a strong centralization. The decision-making centre, moreover, was placed outside the Ministry of National Education, i.e. in the Central Committee of the governing communist party. The Ministry was only expected to implement the directives coming from that centre. At the local or individual levels of the formal education structure there was almost no decision taken on the school management or curricula. As a result, a curricular stagnation of the secondary schooling appeared. It may be said that schools had closer links with the political and ideological system than with the scientific and technological developments, and the system of production. An extreme uniformity and no internal differentiation among schools of any given type killed teachers' curricular and methodological initiatives, and at the same time lowered the quality of education. In that context, serious doubts were raised about the communist state's ability to guarantee a minimum heterogeneity implied in the idea of individual aspect of the teaching-learning process.

The practice of simple transmitting and passing on knowledge was one of the most unfavourable characteristics of the Polish secondary schooling over the last couple decades. Schools concentrated themselves on offering basic, fundamental range of information and on making students understand major trends and structures of knowledge. That could not convey the techniques of active cognition, since students were not confronted with the rich world of life-phenomena. It was known from the theory of learning that school must endeavour to achieve the stage when a student should get from reality the necessary ability to generalize and understanding of major structures as independently as possible. It was also evident that confrontation of gained knowledge with reality and the process of generalization

were indispensable. Nevertheless, encountering reality experimenting, studying original works and authentic primary source material etc. were hardly seen in everyday secondary school activities. Usually, the content of teaching in the school framework was reduced to the compulsory curricular material, so as a rule, the habit of enriching it simply did not exist.

At the time of Real Socialism the centralized school system and thereby secondary education hardly reacted to the new tendencies and challenges created by the scientific, technological and economic progress as well as by changing division of labour.

The fact that since the 1970s Poland has switched over to the intensive stage of development has not influenced both the old-fashioned ideal of worker and the established in the post-war period style of his training. In the short term interest of political leaders or of the factory managers the "obedient" and "faithful" worker was constantly desirable. He should not have been interested in neither politics nor change of the condition, type or place of work. Thus, secondary schools should have participated in training such a worker. As a matter of course, these schools have not shaped such virtues as initiative, the ability to take risk and responsibility, creativity, imagination, self-sufficiency, etc.

4. RECENT CHANGES

The socio-political changes that occurred in Poland and the other Central and Eastern European countries during the last five years provided the background to the recent innovations in secondary education (23). First and foremost, the changes in fundamental educational goals appeared to shift the accent from the objective to the subjective side of education. That involved the principle of individualization that necessitated recognition of the differences in students' personal, intellectual, emotional and practical skills according to their physical and psychological developments. The dogmatic collectivism, ready to sacrifice the unfolding of the individual in the name of an abstract "common personality", was rejected. Many current political and educational declarations articulate the opinion that education and training always depend upon an individual. Not all people are capable of the same performance level or skill. This assumption consists of stimulating in every way possible each individual student's motivation by bearing in mind her/his individual capacity, motives and the possibility afforded by her/his environment. As a consequence the state school system must adjust itself to this fact. And this is the reason for an expansion of a differentiated school structure (24).

One of the major educational changes that has been put into effect recently challenged the ideological uniformity and official indoctrination which had been imposed on schools during the communist period. From the general theoretical point of view this challenge expressed the idea that public schools ought to be neutral or objective in matters concerning ideology and view of life. However, in Poland this principle remained an assumption only, since after communist withdrawal public schools became an arena of the religious indoctrination. As early as in 1990 the new government introduced religion classes in all elementary and secondary schools. Thus, the public education became, in fact, denominational with special status of the Roman Catholicism, although the rights of religious minorities were legally insured.

In 1989-1991 the state monopoly for establishing and running schools was broken. The non-state schools were opened at various level of the system and with various specializations. At present there are community schools,

(23) SZEBENYI, PETER (1992). Change in the systems of public education in East Central Europe. *Comparative Education*, Vol. 28, nr 1, pp. 19-31.

(24) WIATROWSKI, ZYGMUNT (1993). Edukacja zawodowa w integrującej się Europie (Vocational Education in Integrating Europe). *Materiały konferencji naukowej "Edukacja Europejska-Idea-Tresci-Realia. Jachranka. Komitet Prognoz "Polska XXI Wieku" przy Prezydium PAN* (manuscript).

founded by parents who cover most of the expenses to maintain them, and private schools, the profit-making enterprises, that intend to be agents for education of children from wealthy families. Unfortunately, the information available does not permit in-depth analysis of the development of the non-public sector of the country's formal education. Nevertheless as a hypothesis, it may be assumed that the education provided by the state schools is acquiring more and more characteristics of mass education, while non-public education becomes increasingly elitist.

With regard to management and administration of education, the new government pursued a policy of decentralization. The necessity to depart from a rule of nonsensical excessive administrative control and supervision was an essential task of the undertaken reform. The hierarchical management structures were abandoned in favour of horizontal structures. That meant fewer directives from above and more co-operation at the bottom level. Most decision-making has been delegated to the educational councils (school, local and national) which are composed of representatives of teachers, parents, students and local communities.

Nevertheless, the new education act, passed by the Parliament in 1991, established a clear centralized hierarchy of decision-making and responsibility. Local education authorities (kuratoria), until then forming a part of the local administration, have been directly subordinated to the Ministry of National Education (25). The Ministry co-ordinates and implements the state education policy, supervises the local education intendent offices and decides on every regional educational program, since the manner in which local initiatives are financed depends on its pronouncement and interpretation. The centralized funding of schools only from the state budget has not been changed. Thus, the system of educational management remained centralized with some modifications to reward and encourage local participation.

It is assumed that education reform must be a part of a large-scale social reform. One of its main aims is to introduce a human dimension as well as a democratic element in education, in order to foster personality development and contribute to social innovation. To achieve this aim, it is necessary to create equal educational opportunities for all in a democratic process. Furthermore, students should be educated to become autonomous citizens willing to assume responsibility in a democratic society. To cope with this general principle, formal education must become an agent of social change and establish a close link between progress in science and technology on the one hand and the genuine needs of people for autonomous participation in shaping the social consequences of progress on the other (26). It is easy to conclude that this rhetoric is very similar to, if not identical with the routinism of the old regime educational language. It appears that the only difference between previous and present educational declamations lies in appropriate using of two words. Namely, the word "socialism" was replaced by the word "democracy".

A special role is attached to secondary education that should have clear and specific objectives, including the objectives of encouraging the students initiative, problem

solving abilities and other aspects of personal development. Hence, the need for improving the status of general education is emphasized. For almost all educationists who participate in the secondary education debate it became clear that the acquisition of a convertible knowledge, that is a type of knowledge which permits the student to continue in any of the various forms of secondary education, is closely related to improvements of general education. It is claimed that convertible knowledge is desirable not only for the intelligentsia but also for blue-collar workers. Hence, a wider general education should proceed all kinds of vocational training (27).

On the basis of this reference, starting from 1989 the guidelines have been set out to promote general education rather than channel most of 15 year-olds into early post-primary vocational training. This assumption did not yield a radical change within the scope of general education in vocational schools. But a long process of increasing the number of places in general and technical or full vocational secondary schools, leading to matura and tertiary education, has been started. In the last few years the number of general and technical secondary schools, and thereby the percentage of students who began full secondary education, increased. At the same time the number of lower vocational schools and percentage of their students considerably dropped [Fig. 5].

The objectives of vocational training have been shifted from serving the requirements of a centrally planned economy to the market economy. The new approach to objectives of secondary vocational schools is evident when we look at them as instruments of implementing of professional training. At present they emphasize the capacity to transfer core skills to new situations, the competence in job and range of occupational skills, the competence applicable to work, community expectations and adult life. Simultaneously, vocational schools should form interests, prepare for the "world of work", teach how to adjust to the changing occupational environment etc. (28). Thus, there is a visible tendency to form a bridge between general and vocational education, and to overcome a "monocultural" type of vocational training.

To meet these aims and to adjust vocational training to the needs of the market economy, some innovative initiatives were undertaken. The most frequent include the creation of so called polyvocational classes, the implementation of a broad-profiled training, the introduction of the curricula in new occupations and specializations, the establishment of general secondary schools attached to vocational schools, the use of curricula developed by teachers, finally - the improvement of practical training and of the school workshops activities (29). Similarly to the other Central and Eastern European nations, the focus of these innovations relied on modernization rather than on radical structural reform. At the moment the idea of a fundamental reform of the structure of education system cannot be put into effect. The inadequate funding for education and economic crisis make this intention impossible. In spite of that, many organizational and curricular innovations are being introduced throughout the previous structure of secondary education. In particular, a new correspondence between schools and the society has been established (30).

(25) Ustawa z 7 września 1991 o systemie oświaty (Law of September 7, 1991 on the education system). In: *Dziennik Ustaw Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej*. Warszawa, nr 95 (1991), point 425.

(26) KWIECINSKI, ZBIGNIEW (1992). Konflikt uspołecznienia i etatyzacji (Conflict of socialization and state-controlled education). In: *Podmiotowość jako problem filozoficzny, społeczny i pedagogiczny*. Warszawa. Komitet Prognoz "Polska XXI Wieku" przy Prezydium PAN, pp. 101-112.

(27) KWIATKOWSKI, STEFAN M. (1993). Szkolnictwo zawodowe (Vocational schooling). In: *Encyklopedia pedagogiczna*. Warszawa. Fundacja Innowacja, pp. 776-780.

(28) Ministry of National Education (1995). *Raport na temat polityki edukacyjnej w Polsce* (Report on the educational policy in Poland). Warszawa (manuscript), pp. 45-48.

(29) DROGOSZ-ZABLOCKA, ELZBIETA AND SMOCZYŃSKA, ANNA (1994). Vocational training for young people. In: *Council of Europe Newsletter*. Strasbourg, nr 2/94, p. 37.

(30) CAILLODS, F. ET AL. (1995). Trends and challenges in Eastern Europe. *IIEP Newsletter*. Vol. XIII (1995), nr 1, pp. 1-3.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The most strategic problems of secondary education in Poland have not been solved neither by the old regime of Real Socialism nor by the new democratic state. It has been claimed that secondary education should be open to all and not just for the few. It has also been assumed that it should be universal and not selective, and that its curriculum should emphasize general rather than vocational education. But these assumptions have never been achieved.

Furthermore, it has been well known that the concluding phase of the school has been a "foundation-laying" phase only, and not an ultimate vocational training. This latter, containing the technological specialization required for performing a determined job, should be the responsibility of employers or at least be under their continuous supervision.

However, the educational policy makers have simply ignored this principle. They have also disregarded an operative maxim, although formulated in the paradoxical way, that "the best vocational education in today's rapidly changing society is a valid general education both in terms of breadth and quality" (31).

This essay is rather sketchy and premature because it was written hastily without a necessary in-depth study of the rich primary and secondary source material and without inevitable reflection on the evidence. Perhaps in the future there will be the opportunity to improve a basis for more critical consideration of the development of secondary education in both pre —and post— transformation periods of Central and Eastern European nations.

(31) HUSEN, TORSTEN (1990). *Education and the Global Concern*. Oxford-New York. Pergamon Press, p. 43.

TABLE
Profession: environmental protection technician (technician of sanitary facilities)

Specialization: protection against air pollution
Age of candidates: from 19 years of age
Complete comprehensive secondary education

No.	Subject	Semester				Total hrs per week in training cycle
		I	II	III	IV	
		No. of weeks of training				
		20	14	20	18	
No. of hrs per week						
1.	Introduction to political science	-	-	2	2	4
2.	The basics of psychology, sociology and organization of labour	-	-	-	2	2
3.	Physical education	2	2	2	2	8
4.	Defensive training	2	2	-	-	4
5.	Specialistic chemistry	6	-	-	-	6
6.	Specialistic physics	3	3	4	-	10
7.	Engineering drawing	2	2	-	-	4
8.	Electrical engineering and automatics	-	-	2	2	4
9.	Materials science	-	3	-	-	3
10.	Environmental protection	3	-	-	-	3
11.	Propagation of pollution in the atmosphere	4	-	-	-	4
12.	Treatment of waste gases	-	5	4	5	14
13.	Dust collection plants and ventilation	-	-	4	5	9
14.	Production engineering	-	3	2	-	5
15.	Analytical and technological laboratory	8	10	8	8	34
16.	Industrial safety	-	-	-	2	2
17.	Economics of industrial enterprises	-	-	2	2	4
TOTAL		30	30	30	30	120
Non-obligatory:						
	Foreign language	2	2	2	2	8
	Sports and recreation	2	2	2	2	8

Practical vocational training - four weeks during the second semester.

TABLE 1:
TEACHING PLAN FOR GENERAL SECONDARY SCHOOLS
(Basic major)

No	Subject	Grade				Total
		I	II	III	IV	
1.	Polish language	4	4	4	4	16
2.	Russian language	3	3	2	2	10
3.	West European language	4	3	3	3	13
4.	History	3	2	2	2	9
5.	Introduction to social science	-	-	-	2	2
6.	Biology/hygiene	-	2	2	2	6
7.	Geography	2	2	2	-	6
8.	Mathematics	4	3	4	4	15
9.	Physics/astronomy	2	2	3	3	10
10.	Chemistry	1	2	2	-	5
11.	Technical education	2	1	2	-	5
12.	Music/art	-	1	1	1	3
13.	Physical education	2	2	2	2	8
14.	Defensive training	2	2	-	-	4
15.	Optional classes	-	-	-	4	4
16.	Preparation for family life	1	1	1	1	4
17.	1 hr for class tutor ^x					
TOTAL		30	30	30	30	120
Non-obligatory:						
18.	Latin	2	2	2	2	8
19.	Sports/recreation ^{xx}	2	2	2	2	8
20.	School choir		2			2
21.	School band		2			2

^x Hours for class tutor replace preparation for family life every other week,

^{xx} Comprehensive secondary schools which have the necessary facilities and staff may include the one hour of non-obligatory sports and recreation in the compulsory physical education.

TABLE 2:
TEACHING PLAN FOR LOWER VOCATIONAL SCHOOLS

Vocation: assembler of electronic sub-assemblies

Age of candidates: 15 - 17 years

Completed primary school

No.	Subject	Grade			Total hrs per week in training cycle
		I	II	III	
		Number of weeks of study			
		38	38	38	
		Number of hrs per week			
1.	Polish language	2	3	2	7
2.	History	2	1	-	3
3.	Civic knowledge	-	-	2	2
4.	Mathematics	2	2	2	6
5.	Physics	3	-	-	3
6.	Physical education	2	2	2	6
7.	Defensive training	1	-	-	1
8.	Preparation for family life ^x	1	1	1	3
9.	Hour for class tutor ^{xx}				
10.	The basics of engineering and mechanical construction	2	2	-	4
11.	Electrical engineering	4	2	-	6
12.	Engineering	-	6	3	9
13.	Industrial safety and law	-	-	1	1
14.	Management of enterprises	-	-	1	1
15.	Practical vocational training	12 ^{xx}	14 ^{xx}	21 ^{xx}	47
TOTAL		31	33	35	99
-	Russian language	2	2	1	5
-	Recreation and sports	2	2	2	6

^x Hours for class tutor replace preparation for family life every other week.

^{xx} For adolescent workers the number of hours in accordance with the Work Code.

**TABLE 3:
PLAN OF INSTRUCTION IN POST SECONDARY
VOCATIONAL SCHOOLS**

Trade: building technician

Specialty: building

Age of candidate: 15 to 18

Length of study: five years

Required education: elementary school

	Subject	Grade					Total number of hours weekly in the course of study
		I	II	III	IV	V	
		Number of weeks of study					
		38	38	32	32	30	
		Number of hours weekly					
1.	Polish	4	4	3	2	2	15
2.	Russian	2	2	2	2	—	8
3.	History	2	2	2	—	—	6
4.	Introduction to social science	—	—	—	—	2	2
5.	Economic geography	—	—	—	2	—	2
6.	Mathematics	4	4	2	3	2	15
7.	Physics	2	2	2	2	—	8
8.	Chemistry	2	2	—	—	—	4
9.	Physical education	2	2	2	2	2	10
10.	Defence preparation	2	2	—	—	—	4
11.	Facultative classes	—	—	—	—	2	2
12.	Preparation for life in the family*						
13.	Hours at the disposal of the form master*	1	1	1	1	1	5
14.	Building constructions	—	—	5	5	3	13
15.	Building documentation	4	3	4	3	2	16
16.	Sanitary installations	—	—	2	2	—	4
17.	Electrical installations	—	—	3	—	—	3
18.	Building technology	2	3	4	3	4	16
19.	Specialization classes**	—	—	—	—	6	6
20.	Building regulations	—	—	—	2	2	4
21.	Economics and organization of building	—	—	—	3	4	7
22.	Practical classes	6	6	—	—	—	12
	Total	33	33	32	32	32	162
Practical training: six weeks in grade 3 Practical training: six weeks in grade 4							
	Extracurricular:						
—	— Second foreign language	2	2	2	2	2	10
—	— Recreation and sports activities	2	2	2	2	2	10

*) Hours at the disposal of the form master alternate with preparation for life in the family every two weeks.

**) At the discretion of the school management (after the line of specialization has been agreed on with the school authorities, the local planning commission, and the enterprise which exercises patronage over the school).

FIGURE 1:
CURRENT SCHOOL SYSTEM IN POLAND

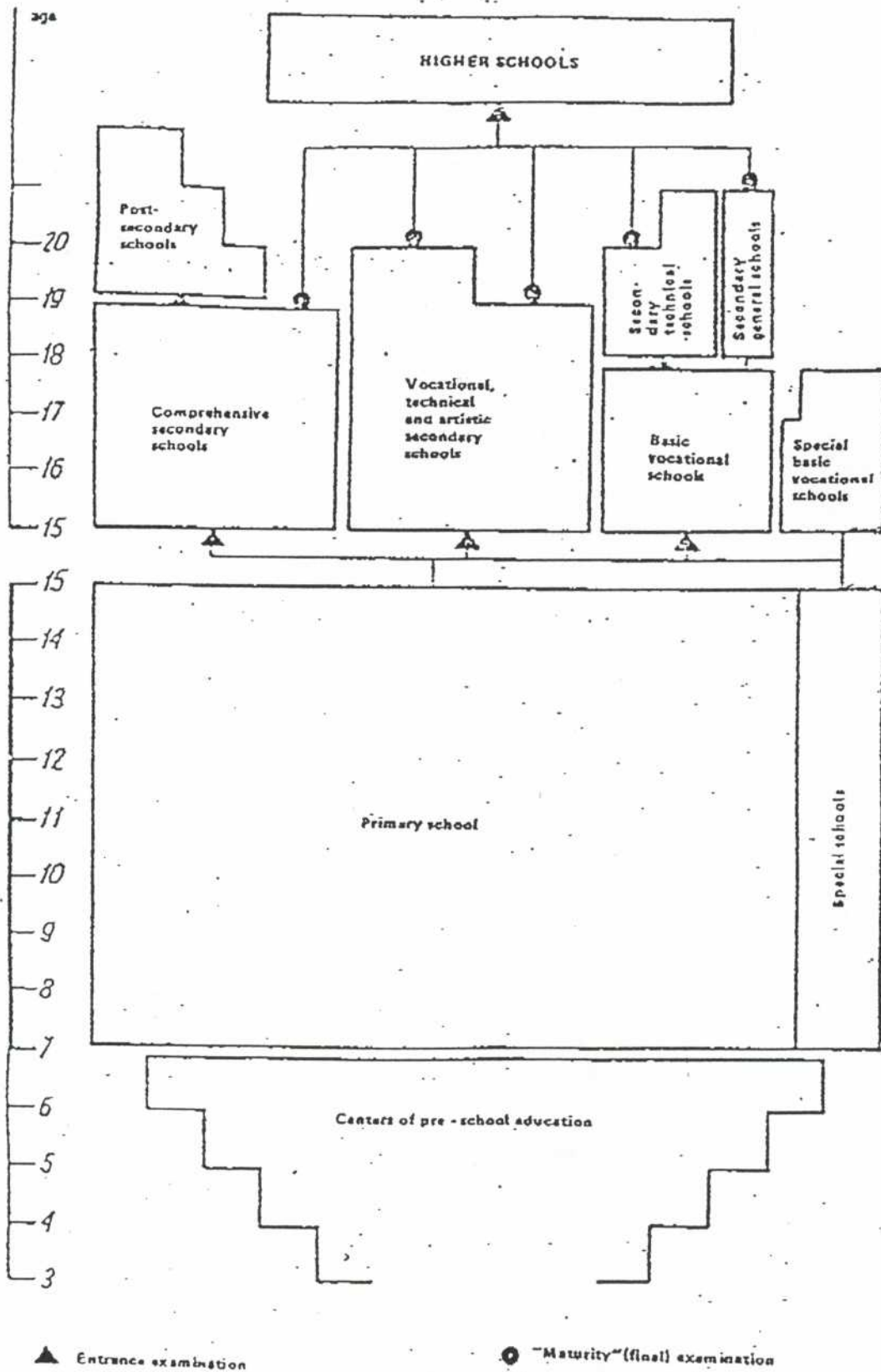


FIGURE 2:
 PERCENTAGE OF GRADUATES ENTERING UPPER LEVEL OF
 EDUCATION SCHOOL YEAR 1985/86

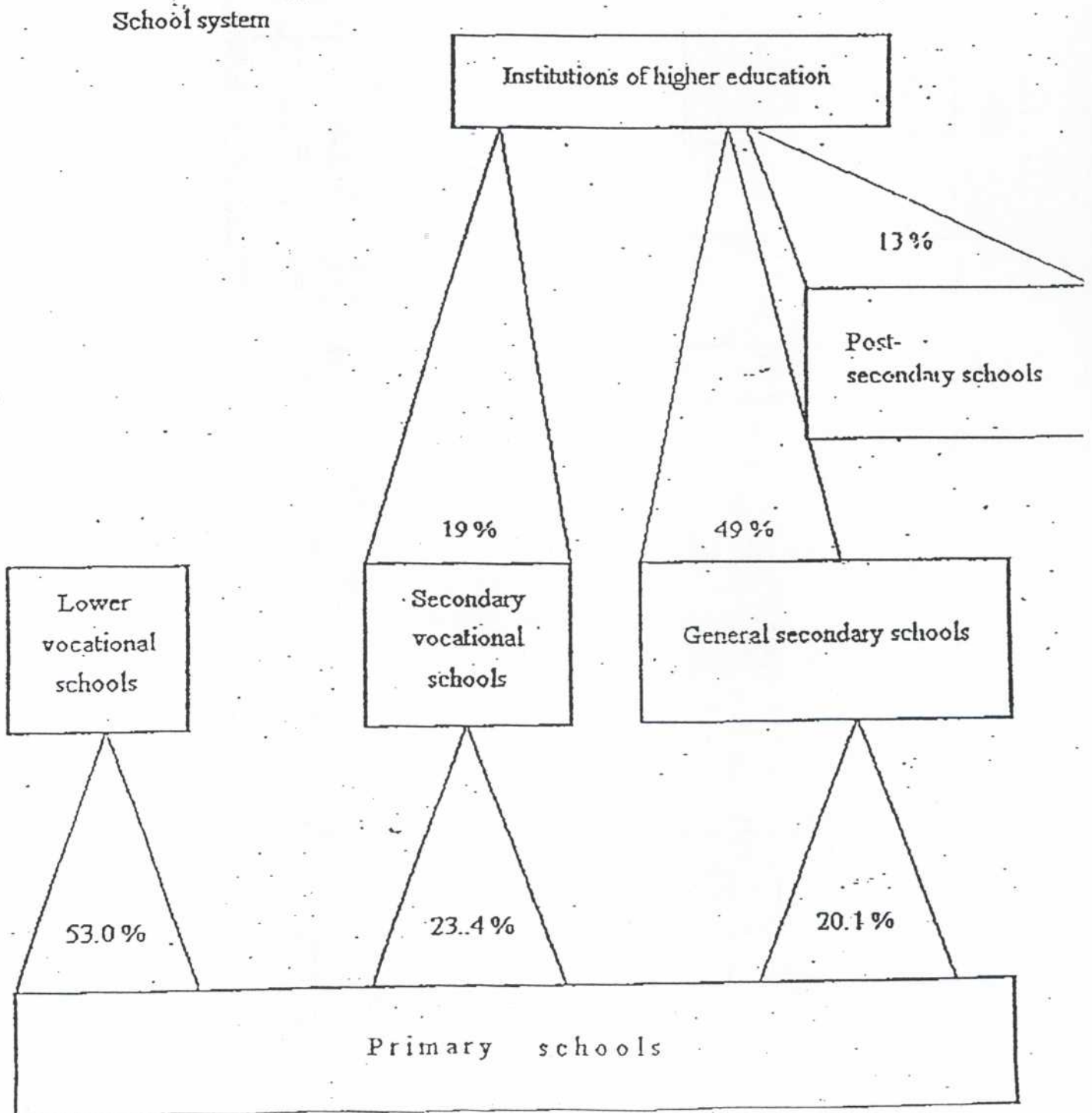


FIGURE 3:
PUPILS NOT IN EMPLOYEMENT IN SECONDARY LEVEL SCHOOLS
IN THE SCHOOL YEAR 1990/91

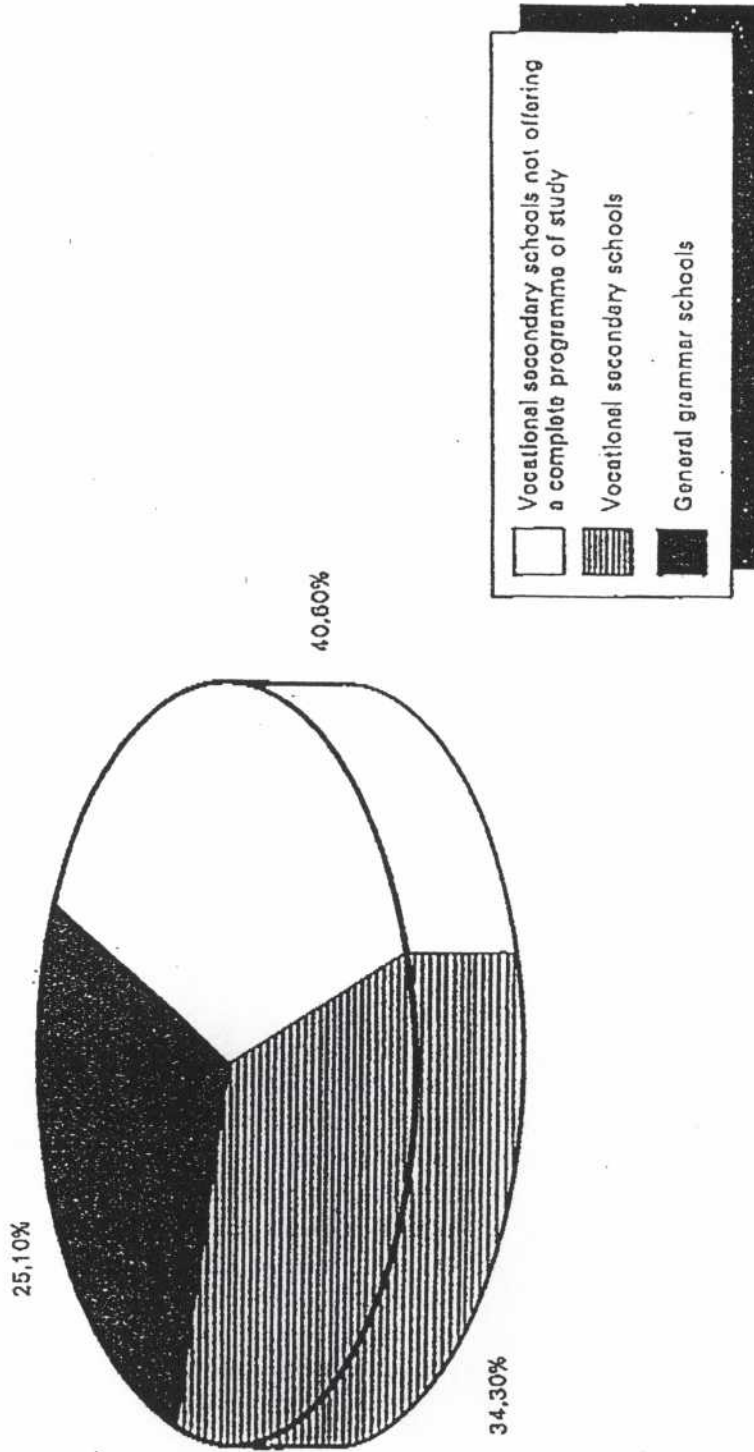


FIGURE 4:
 POST PRIMARY SCHOOLS FOR THOSE NOT IN EMPLOYEMENT
 IN THE SCOOOL YEAR 1990/91

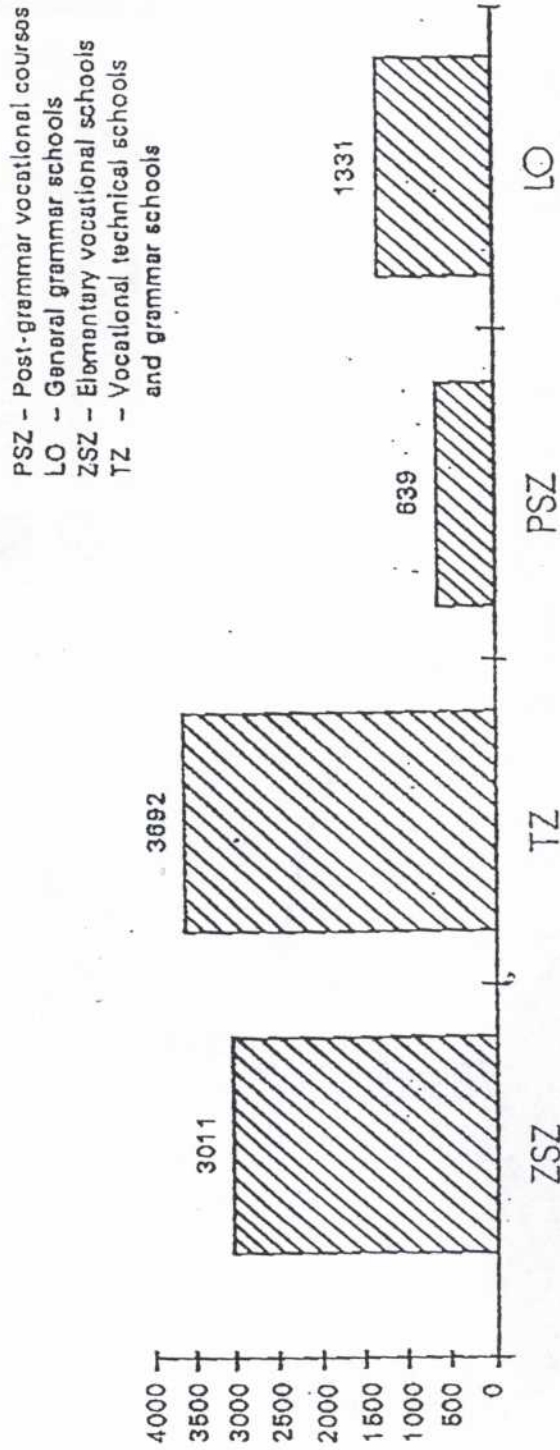


FIGURE 5:
 PERCENTAGE OF GRADUATES ENTERING UPPER LEVEL
 OF EDUCATION SCHOOL YEAR 1993/94

School system

