

EDUCATION IN POLAND

ALMOST 100 per cent of Polish children attend eight-grade primary schools. In this respect Poland places second in the world, after the United States. Almost half of primary school graduates continue their education at four or five year's comprehensive, technical and vocational secondary schools. The other half at three years' vocational schools.

In the last thirty-five years the Polish system of education underwent several reforms and many minor modifications and experiments. Their aim was to improve the basic principle of Polish educa-

tional policy-democratization of education.

In order to give equal chances to all young people the Sejm of the Polish People's Republic adopted in 1973 a resolution on universal ten year school. For the same reason in November 1980 the minister of education, Professor Krzysztof Kruszewski, announced that the idea of ten-grade school would be abandoned, and eight-grade school system would be preserved. The reform of education will consist in the

modification and modernization of programme and teaching, he said.

It may seem paradoxical to compare both the above mentioned decisions and arguments in their support. But we must keep in mind that in the seven years, which passed between the Sejm's decision and the minister's announcement, a lot changed in Poland, including the economic situation. The minister's decision, however, is not a mere consequence of the lack of funds, but it is also aimed at preserving good traditions of Polish schooling. It was also caused by critical opinions about the ten-grade school, expressed by parents, children and teachers.

The Sejm's act concerning the universal ten-grade school was preceded by comprehensive studies, published in the Report on the State of Education in Poland. The Report, along with the opinion on the existing system of education, contained several variants of the reform. Each of them necessitated investments, expenditures on teachers training, new books and educational equipment, transporting peasant children to school.

The authorities have decided to choose the most expensive variant, as they thought and it was well-grounded in the every 1970s that the state will be able to spend eight per cent of the annual national income on education, assuming that the rate

of the increase of the national income will amount to 4-7 per cent. Such were the expenditures required by the universal ten-grade school.

But after a few years it turned out that only four per cent of the national income were allocated for education, so it was impossible to implement any principle of the reform fully.

Still in 1977 seven-year-old children began schooling according to the programme of the ten-grade school. At present 1.5 million children are being educated according to new curricula, so is it possible to abandon the new structures?

Yes, it is, since, in spite of the fact that the ten-grade school has been introduced de iure, but de facto it has remained in the sphere of conceptions and plans. The new programmes have been introduced in the first, second and third grade, where one pedagogue teaches seven subjects. At this stage it is impossible to speak about any structural solutions. Structures will begin in the seventh grade, where each subject will be taught by a different specialist.

The programme of the reformed eight-grade school will be based on the primary level education/1-3 grade/in its new form. Thus, the major element of the reform changes in the curriculum of indi-

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vidual subjects and a different schedule of lessons will be preserved. Or, more exactly, it will be adapted to the requirements of the eight-grade school.

This operation is also complicated, but it was preceded by seven-years of preparations.

—First of all teachers' training. At present more than, fifty per cent of Polish teachers are university graduates. Almost 100,000 study at teachers' colleges—some of them extra-murally. New teachers' departments have been opened at some universities. Besides, a year before the introduction of the reformed curricula, teachers attend special courses. In addition to lectures and consultations with specialists there are lectures at the Radio and Television Teachers' University.

—A new network of schools has been organized for the past five years. At first small rural schools with few teachers were liquidated and instead there appeared a network of rural community schools. Now a conception has been adopted to organize small primary schools/1-3 grade/. Pupils from higher grades will be taken by school buses to the nearest rural community schools.

—All children of six, will still attend the so called "preparatory

that a year a child will be able to count to ten, will know the alphabet and will be able to read some simple words.

All these organizational solutions are aimed at creating equal chances for all young people. A considerable increase of expenditures on education/as of 1981-6 per cent of the national income/will help to overcome the most important difficulties of our system of education. There will be new schools and new kindergartens, new flats for teachers/especially in rural areas, where it is difficult to employ teachers with higher education/.

Thus the authorities came to the conclusion that the idea of democratization of education will be implemented in a better way by a comprehensive eight-grade school than by a weak ten-grade school. The more so because Poland has a good system of secondary education, which makes it possible for graduates of all types of schools to continue their education at universities or colleges.

The new conception of the reform of our educational system, though not so spectacular as the ten-grade school with the same curriculum for all pupils, is more adapted to the current Polish situation. Besides, no country in the world has managed to create a universal secondary school