

# Global field, local approach – 20th century Polish education comparativists and their works

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**Abstract.** Comparative education as a pedagogical subdiscipline has developed in Poland in close connection with the history of education from the very beginning. The paper analyzes the main publications of leading Polish pedagogues of the 20th century, and the research has been based on source analysis. The aim of the paper is to present the achievements of Polish comparativists of 20th century and their contribution to the development of comparative education as a global field of research. The authors attempt to answer the question concerning the political context of Polish 20th century education comparativists' work, as scientific activity in Middle and Eastern Europe after World War II was strongly involved in political and ideological terms. The result of the research is an indication of the participation of Polish pedagogues in an international community of researchers and Polish contribution to the development of comparative pedagogy as a scientific discipline.

**Keywords.** Comparative education, Polish comparativists, pedagogy, comparative research, history of education

## 1 Introduction

The inspiration for this paper was a research project and a monograph entitled *North American Scholars of Comparative Education. Examining the Work and Influence of Notable 20th Century Comparativists*. This book, edited by Erwin H. Epstein, which was published in 2019, aims to familiarize readers with the figures and achievements of prominent American scholars exploring the area of comparative research in education. Research activity focused on this subject that was undertaken over the twentieth century in Poland has not been studied comprehensively yet, but it undoubtedly should as the contribution of Polish scientists in the development of the above-mentioned subdiscipline dates back to the 19th century. It is easy to notice that the beginnings of studies in this field in Poland show some temporary convergence with activities by Marc Antoine Jullien de Paris, who is after all considered a precursor of comparative research in education. Wojciech Szwejkowski should be mentioned in this context, who published his *Uwagi nad wyższymi szkołami polskimi w porównaniu do niemieckich (Remarks on Polish Higher Schools Compared with German Schools)* in 1808. A few years later, on the initiative of Jan Kanty Krzyżanowski, in 1822, works by Jullien de Paris were translated into Polish.

Nevertheless comparative education as a pedagogical subdiscipline developed in Poland dynamically after WWII. However, it should be emphasized that earlier in 20th century Polish pedagogues had already recognized the importance of comparative studies. In 1936 Józef Chałasiński, an influential figure in Polish sociology, published a monograph entitled *Szkola w społeczeństwie amerykańskim (The School in American Society)* where he presented historical, socio-economic and cultural conditions of American education. In the same year Zygmunt Mysłakowski proposed his definition of comparative pedagogy in the first volume of *Encyklopedia edukacji (Encyclopedia of Education)* which was one of the first publications of that kind in Poland. Polish pedagogues recognized the importance of educational problems and educational reforms in other countries in order to be able to introduce similar solutions in the Polish education system. The reasons for that were of historical and political nature - Poland became an independent democratic country in 1918 and there was some willingness to create modern public institutions, including schools, which was a vital need, hence plenty of books and papers describing and comparing foreign education systems were published in Poland in the interwar period.

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Poland in close connection with the history of education from the very beginning. Polish comparative education in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was mainly concerned with the analysis of educational structures and phenomena, taking into account social, economic, cultural as well as historical circumstances that occurred in Poland and other countries. Supplementing comparative analyzes with historical considerations is the most characteristic research approach in Polish comparative studies. Furthermore, numerous Polish scholars in the field of education graduated from faculties of philosophy and they perceived pedagogy as an applied philosophy widely [1].

The main purpose of this paper is to present the achievements of the most outstanding representatives of Polish comparative education against the background of the development of this pedagogical subdiscipline as a field of research in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The authors undertake fundamental publications of leading Polish pedagogues of the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, as follow: Bogdan Nawroczyński, Zygmunt Mysłakowski, Sergiusz Hessen, Kazimierz Sośnicki and Mieczysław Pęcherski as the main subject of analysis. The research was based on the source analysis of their works as well as available archive materials available.

While studying their works, consideration must be given to the fact that academic, scientific and cultural activity in the Eastern part of Europe of those time was strongly influenced by politics and ideology. Therefore the authors attempt to answer the question concerning the political context of the works by Polish educational comparativists. The research question to which extent Polish scholars after World War II were able to participate in shaping an international field of research in comparative education constitutes an attempt to present the achievements and profiles of Polish comparativists of 20th century and their contribution to the development of comparative education in Europe. Taking into account the region they lived and worked in, we should address the questions in which areas they influenced the development of world comparative education and how the Polish comparatists fitted in with global trends in comparative studies. The result of the research is an indication of the participation of Polish pedagogues in an international community of researchers and Polish share in the development of comparative pedagogy as a scientific discipline.

## 2 The tradition of Polish comparative education

Comparative education, as a sub-discipline of pedagogy started developing in Poland not until the end of World War II. However, it is worth emphasizing that the first comparative studies had been conducted in Poland much earlier. Among the precursors of comparative studies in the Polish pedagogy we should mention first of all Wojciech Szwejkowski, who was the first one to publish a work entitled *Remarks on Polish Higher Schools Compared with German Schools (Uwagi nad wyższymi szkołami polskimi w porównaniu do niemieckich)* in 1808 [2]. Szwejkowski was pedagogue, a piarist, who received his excellent education in Prussia. He graduated from the prestigious Gedinke Seminary in Berlin for Polish priarists. In his publication he described the specificity of the activities of Berlin Gymnasiums, but also other schools of that type which operate in Saxony. He presented an analysis of the functioning of school classes and the issue of selecting students for those schools. Szwejkowski saw the advantage of Polish schools which had been supervised centrally since the times of the Commission of National Education (1773), while this central supervision was not applied for Prussian schools, which as he noted, meant that Prussia lacked the concept of national education. What is important is that Szwejkowski stressed that the future teachers be educated at a university [3]. A monograph by Szwejkowski was the first pioneering publication in the field of comparative studies in Poland. It is even more significant for the Polish science because Poland of that time, as a result of its three partitions (1772, 1793, 1795) disappeared from the map of Europe, but despite that the Polish scholars attempted to go down in the development of the European science.

In Poland, the tradition of publishing monographs related to foreign educational systems reaches the first half of 19th century. Another important publication from this period, which contributed to the development of Polish comparativism, was the publication of the shortened version of the dissertation by Marc-Antoine Jullien de Paris - a precursor of comparative education - already mentioned in the introduction (*Plan and Preliminary Views for a Work on Comparative Education*) and a dissertation by a chemist, a professor of the Lublin gymnasium entitled *On the Need and Way of Comparing Education (O potrzebie i sposobie porównywania edukacji)* [4]. Although Krzyżanowski did not carry on with that work, this was thanks to his translations that the Jullien de Paris' views on comparative studies were earliest known in Poland. In 1843 Krzyżanowski also published a work entitled *The Historical View of the Scientific Institutes in France (Historyczny obraz instytucji naukowych we Francji)* [5]. The concept developed by Jullien de Paris was also familiar to his close friend - Tadeusz Kościuszko, a Polish patriot who fought for the independence of the USA - who at his request was meant to spread this concept in America and to present its assumptions to President Thomas Jefferson [6].

### 3 The development of Polish comparative education

Despite the fact that publications on the foreign systems had a long tradition in Poland, no one was scientifically involved only in this pedagogical subdiscipline, until 1960s [7]. From the times of development of pedagogy as an academic discipline, rarely did the Polish researchers undertake any comparative analyses. In the first half of 20th century, the Polish comparative education was mainly concerned with the analysis of educational structures and phenomena, taking into account social, economic, cultural but also historical causes that occurred in Poland and in other countries. However, it should be stressed that comparative studies were a novelty for plenty of pedagogues at that time. Supplementing the comparative analyses with historical analyses was a characteristic research approach in the Polish comparativism. When it comes to the Polish publications on comparative education in the interwar period, it is worth mentioning the article by a well-known Polish pedagogue - Zygmunt Mysłakowski entitled *General Pedagogy (Pedagogika ogólna)* from 1936, which was published in the first volume of "Encyclopedia of Education" [8], which was the first publication of that type in Poland. In his article, Mysłakowski included brief information about the new pedagogical sub-discipline, i.e. comparative education. He treated comparative education as a discipline different from the general pedagogy. Mysłakowski understood the comparative education as an extension of the history of education. He believed that the history of education and comparative education described educational systems in various times, various societies, that they show educational reforms strictly related to other signs of social life in a given cultural circle. The history of education deals with educational transformations throughout the course of history and culture of various states and nations, while the comparative education analyzes the contemporary educational structures and phenomena in the world [9].

Also another outstanding Polish pedagogue - Henryk Rowid - wrote about the comparative education as a new pedagogical sub-discipline. In the publication entitled *The Basics and Principles of Education (Podstawy i zasady wychowania)* published in 1946, after the author's death, there was extensive information on comparative education [10].

Polish pedagogues noticed the significance of educational problems and educational reforms in other countries to be capable of introducing similar solutions into the Polish system of education. These types of publications were issued in Poland in the interwar period. One of the most important publications was a monograph by Józef Chałasiński, entitled *The School in American Society (Szkoła w społeczeństwie amerykańskim)*, which presented the historical, socio-economic and cultural conditions of American education [11]. Chałasiński was one of the most outstanding classics of Polish sociology. Therefore, this monograph presents a slightly different approach than the comparative analyses by Polish pedagogues. Chałasiński stressed that the American system of public education did not developed based on the principle of state monopoly in the field of education. Public schools emerged as a result of self-organization of the society, which took care of its educational needs on its own. As Chałasiński points out, the American system of education is based on the self-government of the society on various organizational levels, from the local to the state one. A characteristic feature of the American education is the right to establish private institutions, from elementary to higher schools, and to administer those facilities as they were enterprises [12]. At a time when public education systems were already in place in Europe, the functioning of public and private education in the United States was regarded as an expression of the democratic principle of justice. The sociological analyses of the system of education in the United States brought the specificity of such a different education closer to Polish and European educators and educational activists.

After World War II the comparative studies in Poland developed, mainly through publications characterizing other European educational systems. The following monographs should be mentioned: *The Reform of Education in USSR (Reforma szkolnictwa w ZSRR)* (1959) by Mieczysław Pęcherski, *On French Education (O szkolnictwie francuskim)* (1961) by Bogdan Nawroczyński, *Education in Modern Belgium (Szkolnictwo w Belgii współczesnej)* (1963) by Anna Mońka-Stanikowa, *Education in England and its Traditions (Szkolnictwo w Anglii i jego tradycje)* (1964) by Jadwiga Loria, *Experimental Education in England and Scotland (Eksperymentalne szkolnictwo w Anglii i Szkocji)* (1964) by Jan Konopnicki and *The Society and Education in United States (Społeczeństwo i szkolnictwo Stanów Zjednoczonych)* (1966) by Józef Chałasiński.

Among the most famous and distinguished Polish teachers who contributed to the development of comparative education in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the following should be mentioned: Bogdan Nawroczyński, Sergiusz Hessen, Kazimierz Sośnicki and Mieczysław Pęcherski.

### 4 Bogdan Nawroczyński (1890-1971) and the importance of comparative Education

Bogdan Nawroczyński was an outstanding Polish pedagogue and educational historian, a philosopher of culture. He is considered to be a co-founder of Polish scientific pedagogy. He was born on 9 April 1882 in Dąbrowa Górnicza. After he had completed his secondary education, he studied architecture at the Warsaw University of

Technology, but after the first term he moved to a law school, which he later also abandoned. He studied philosophy and experimental psychology in Berlin and Leipzig. He graduated from law school in Dorpat. After returning to Poland, he took up philosophical and Polish studies in Lviv, where he defended his doctoral thesis entitled *Prolegomena to Learn about the Quality of the Courts (Prolegomena do nauki o jakości sądów)*, under the guidance of Kazimierz Twardowski. In 1925 he took over the Chair of Pedagogy at the University of Poznań, and in the following year he began to organize pedagogical studies at the University of Warsaw, where he established the Pedagogical Study, which he directed until 1939. During the war, Nawroczyński was engaged in secret teaching. When the war ended, Nawroczyński worked as a professor at the University of Warsaw, where he was the Dean of the Faculty of Humanities in 1946-1948. In 1948 he was removed by the authorities of the People's Republic of Poland of that time, on charges of infecting students with bourgeois pedagogy. He was mainly involved in comparative studies since the 1960s. Professor Bogdan Nawroczyński died in 1974 in Warsaw. Scientific publications by Nawroczyński were focused on notions related to didactics, general pedagogy but also comparative education and the history of educational system and education [13] [14].

It should be stressed that due to the political situation in Poland after World War II, Bogdan Nawroczyński could perform extensive comparativist actions only in the interwar period [15]. As one of the leading European pedagogues of that time he discussed and exchanged ideas with other pedagogues from the Western and Eastern Europe. He often went abroad and maintained plenty of scientific contacts with representatives of the reform pedagogy [16]. This was thanks to him that the latest pedagogical achievements were quickly spread in Poland. As stressed by Bogusław Śliwierski [17], scientific activities undertaken by comparative pedagogues in the interwar period, including Nawroczyński, were directed towards international cooperation, especially in the scope of fighting with the phenomenon of school failures of children and youth. Nawroczyński was interested in the reform of education, especially in Germany, but also in the United States. His scientific interest was related not only to the intention of including scientific pedagogy in the reconstruction of the Republic of Poland after partitions, but also to filling in the gaps in development of Western theoretical and practical pedagogy. In the interwar period, Nawroczyński translated works by the creator of traditional pedagogy - Johan Friedrich Herbart.

According to Nawroczyński, development of comparative education took place in Poland since the 1960s. 20<sup>th</sup> century was related to a growing interest in the issue of education organization in other European countries. Nawroczyński wrote: *Taking care of Poland and its development first of all, it is good to know what happened and is happening at least in our neighbors* [18]. In his scientific publications he analyzed strong links between the Polish pedagogical thought with the world pedagogy. He stressed the contribution of Polish researchers into the development of the conceptual system and classification of the main currents of education. What is highly significant is the fact that Nawroczyński pointed to a normative nature of pedagogy which excludes any attempts to impose historically and culturally strange solutions and norms on the society [19]. As he wrote in his monograph *On French Education (O szkolnictwie francuskim): It is true that the education of each country should be adapted to its own conditions and needs* [20]. While analyzing the educational transformations in France, he stressed that there is a need to pay attention not only to the school system, but above all to the creative forces of society. Presenting the structure of French education, he made direct references to the concept of the French Revolution of 1789 and in particular to Condorcet's thought [21]. Nawroczyński saw the need to publish new studies on educational systems in particular countries, as due to implementation of new educational forms, previous analyses quickly become obsolete. Bearing in mind the development of the educational system in one's own country, it is good to know the solutions that are applied successfully in others.

Nawroczyński carried on with the thoughts of some outstanding comparative scholars: Michael Ernest Sadler, Nicholas Hans and Isaak Kandel, as he believed, like them, that comparative research should primarily analyze the social and cultural contexts which the education is based on. A practical effect of the conducted comparativist studies was to provide better understanding of the importance of one's own national system of education. Nawroczyński believed that one of the main tasks of a comparativist is to establish the significance of education in the light of political, social and cultural phenomena, which determine the national character of the system of education [22]. It seems very important in the comparative education to understand the historical background necessary to fully grasp the essence of educational transformations in a given country or region. It is impossible to analyze the contemporary educational transformations that take place in the world without making any reference to the tradition and history which made up the current shape of the education system.

Nawroczyński was the first Polish pedagogue to propose a qualitatively new understanding of comparative studies, which was to cover both a description of a given system of education, theoretical explanation of its functioning, as well as proper comparative analyses, sometimes not devoid of utilitarian tendencies. It is extremely important in the comparative studies to consider the current information on the system of education, education models, specificity of higher education, but there is also a need to be aware of the complexity of the historical and cultural context in a given country. A comparativist should be required to skillfully analyze and interpret educational phenomena which provide basis for predicting changes in the future. This is how a

methodological sequence emerges: starting from the facts and ending and theoretical rights that explain them, and starting from theoretical rights and ending at empirical ones [23].

Among numerous publications by Nawroczyński, apart from monographs *on French Education*, also his articles published in “The Pedagogical Quarterly” (“Kwartalnik Pedagogiczny”) and “Pedagogical Studies” (“Studia Pedagogiczne”) are worth mentioning [24]. Nawroczyński wrote that comparative education is “pure” science, just like natural sciences [25]. Its starting point is not the normative objectives as in the case of other pedagogical disciplines. The objective of comparative education is to identify permanent links between subjects of the study. As he wrote, the subject of the studies is as follows: *pedagogical facts, most often school systems, although these may also include methods of education and teaching, obstacles, influences and achieved results, pedagogical theories and conditions which it all depends on* [26].

Nawroczyński’s work in the scope of comparative education clearly proves that the Polish comparative studies were strongly connected with the history of education. Without the knowledge of education history and pedagogical thought it would not be possible to conduct correct comparative research. It is also worth noting Nawroczyński’s strong scientific ties with Western researchers, the popularization of their latest studies in the field of pedagogy in Poland, but also his personal contribution to the development of the European and world pedagogy.

## 5 Sergiusz Hessen’s pedagogical views

Sergiusz Hessen was born in 1887 in Russia, and he died in 1950 in Łódź. He studied philosophy at the University of Freiburg, he obtained his doctorate degree in 1910 with the doctoral dissertation entitled *Individuelle Kausalität. Studien zum transzendentalen Empirismus* [27]. After his PhD graduation from the University of Freiburg, Hessen returned to Russia and took up the position of a lecturer at the University of St. Petersburg, and later - at the University of Tomsk in Russia. He was also the head of the Higher Pedagogical Courses at this university. Due to revolutionary sentiments and political changes in 1920s, he decided to continue his studies abroad. In 1935 Hessen arrived in Poland. Soon after his arrival, Hessen obtained Polish citizenship and started his academic career at the Free Polish University, a private higher school in Warsaw. Hessen cooperated also with the Institute of Special Pedagogy of the University of Warsaw as a lecturer of philosophy of education and comparative studies in education [28].

As for Hessen’s comparative studies, his *School and Democracy at the Turn* is considered to be the first such a comprehensive work published in Poland. In this book, the author discussed not only the school systems but also some leading trends in education. Hessen analyzed Austrian, Czech, English and French education systems not only in order to juxtapose them in a mechanical way. Each of his essays concerning a particular country took into consideration the specificity of the educational phenomena against the cultural background which formed the context for their construction and development. Moreover, Hessen avoided restricting his considerations to static analyzes, instead he attempted to reflect the dynamics of the leading trends in a particular system, which could pose a kind of guidelines indicating the direction for further development of education [29].

Apart from school systems, in this work Hessen addressed some pedagogical views of progressivists of education, such as Kerschensteiner and Dewey, as well as Italian educators: Lombardo-Radice and Gentile. This approach enabled the author to present a European pedagogical landscape that had been created in a specific cultural framework. What is noteworthy is Hessen’s tendency to escape from the ideological considerations, particularly on shaping Italian education in the spirit of fascism. Although he demonstrated his strong disappointment with Gentile’s enthusiastic attitude towards this ideology and perceived its education ideals as distant from a rational way of thinking, Hessen claimed that it was too early (the book was published in 1938) to assess any verifiable consequences of Italian education policy and its ideological background [30].

Another Hessen’s comparative work is *Struktura i treść szkoły powszechnej (Structure and Content of Contemporary School)*. The book was ready to be published in 1939, however due to the outbreak of the war the manuscript ready for print was lost. Hessen’s only copy was used for the purposes of his clandestine courses and thank to his students who passed it around it was not lost as was the case of many other Hessen’s works when his apartment was destroyed in fire [31].

In this book he described a uniform school, which he perceived as an institution providing each individual with the right to education suitable to their abilities and needs. The fundamental principle of such a school was equality of all citizens. This profoundly democratic ideal guaranteed “equal chances for everybody” [32]. This construction was opposed to conservative-liberal tendencies observed in numerous Western European countries where governments were ready to provide the access to public schooling by establishing a dual system: general education limited to the privileged part of the society and elementary education essential for simple professional activities. At the beginning of 20th century this policy was replaced by a uniform democratic school in many countries. Hessen mentioned Switzerland, England and even fascist rulers of Italy and Germany (with exceptions concerning particular groups however) [33] among the governments that introduced this solution.

The analyzes of foreign education reforms brought Hessen to the considerations on the Polish school reform and to the question of which foreign solutions could be applied in that case. In these terms it must be admitted that Hessen's comparative works, as many other authors', aimed at practical activities - solutions that could improve the state of art in Poland of interwar period and lead to establishment of an authentically democratic school system [34].

In *Education in Soviet Russia* co-authored by Nicholas Hans that was originally written in German and translated into Polish, the authors analyzed the development of soviet schooling and changes of education policy from the soviet revolution (1917) till the end of the so-called 5-year planning period (1932). Their work is multi-dimensional and complex: the historical overview of Russian schooling that began in the era of empress Catherine the Great of 18th century is the starting point of the considerations. However, the authors focused their analysis on a communist idea of school, namely emphasis put on vocational education and so-called polytechnization of schooling together with its secularisation and co-education [35].

The profound changes of the soviet education profile were accompanied by a certain ideological attitude - Hessen emphasized the aim of education that was to create a completely new model of a citizen: a perfect communist and a member of a classless society. The instrument of creating a new type of a citizen and a society was political education, designed in general for the adult part of the society. This kind of education was introduced by worker's clubs and peasant's clubs offering propaganda books and brochures on communism that were available in so-called "red corners" in those clubs. The publicity however was much less interested than expected - for that reason the clubs started to offer various practical courses and even tea dances to attract some people. Hessen did not make a secret of his attitude towards those initiatives: he believed that the system of political education was like a tumour of soviet education policy and a kind of caricature of the state church that the former governments attempted to develop. He described this initiative as similar to religious missionary activity, and even the local government became sceptic towards it. The opinions that these centres of political education should be replaced by new schools for children and youth were not isolated cases [36].

What is noticeable is the fact that in their preface to the book the authors revealed their political and pedagogical views that had little in common with communism and marxism. Thus, to avoid the risk of lack of objectivity towards the analyzed system, they adopted a specific methodology. It was based on the content analysis, but limited only to the native sources, namely some documents produced in Soviet Russia by the Soviet officials responsible for the development of education system and education policy. Hessen and Hans stressed that the aim was to leave out the works of foreign researchers who might have been biased due to their fascination with the revolutionary soviet system and its institutions which was common among the Western intellectuals of that time [37].

Such high awareness of the potential faults in the scientific work and attempts to overcome them using the academic apparatus and proper methodological instruments prove that Hessen was a researcher who complied with the academic standards even in unfavourable political conditions. This attitude had its price in the part of Europe he lived and worked in - as it has been mentioned, the university authorities in Łódź prevented him from the continuation of his comparative research, and as a result of this decision Hessen's academic career was limited to less politically controversial areas such as lecturing Russian language and literature [38].

Hessen's position in the field of science, and above all, his participation in the development of the world pedagogy was confirmed in the obituary of this researcher by the outstanding representative of this field of research, Nicholas Hans [39]. He describes his colleague as a "humanist, philosopher, educationist (...) a leading expert on education in Slavonic countries, and a person who through his many publications in ten languages won a world-wide reputation" [40].

Hans recalled his first meeting with Hessen which took place in Prague in 1923 - both researchers found that their scientific interests were convergent, and at the same time they worked on books considering comparative pedagogy. A few years later they collaborated on Hessen's *Education in Soviet Russia*, which was published in English in 1930. Apart from Slavonic countries, Hessen was also a great admirer of England and English tradition. In the obituary Hans emphasizes the popularity of Hessen's works in Italy, which he owed to collaboration with Italian comparatist Luigi Volpicelli, a member of the scientific team preparing the *Year Book of Education*, who was also the editor of Hessen's works. Hans concludes that, "his death is a loss not only to all Slavonic countries, but to the cause of education everywhere" [41].

## **6 Kazimierz Sośnicki and his comparative approach**

Kazimierz Sośnicki was born in 1883 in Lviv, and he died in 1976. He studied physics, mathematics and philosophy at the University of Lviv, he was awarded his PhD degree in mathematics and philosophy in 1910 (dissertation entitled *Explanation and Description in Scientific Research*). For several years Sośnicki was employed as a gymnasium teacher; he was also the author of textbooks in the field of logic [42]. During the WWII he was involved in the establishment of the clandestine Pedagogical Institute in Lviv, and after the war he co-founded the University of Toruń [43].

In his works, Sośnicki was devoted to studies on education which were published after World War II and which systematized the problems of European and world pedagogy. He also researched the general principles of pedagogy and analyzed diverse normative assumptions of theoretical pedagogical concepts at the turn of the 19th and 20th century, at the same time providing the basis for interpretation of the implemented teaching practice [44]. He discussed among others the concept of education within various pedagogical trends, as traditional and paedocentric pedagogy. He compared those approaches with soviet pedagogy and its ideals - in his view, it was only the soviet pedagogy that was able to merge adversative goals of education, namely constraint and free development of the young generation. Moreover, those goals were in accordance with the ideals and aspirations of the society in general [45]. Despite such remarks demonstrating the superiority of soviet education over Western solutions and soviet economic and scientific achievements that could have served the Western countries as the model path of development [46], in his publications and in his work as a university lecturer Sośnicki attempted to meet the scientific standards. As a consequence, in early 1950s his didactic activity was limited and his book *Pedagogika ogólna (General Pedagogy)* was withdrawn from the university use due to political reasons [47].

In his *Development of Western Pedagogy at the Turn of 19th and 20th Century* (1967) Sośnicki unertook an analysis of two main trends observed in Western Europe and the United States in that period, namely the traditional and progressive education (so called New Education). This was a basis for a presentation of changes within the scientific nature of leading European education theories, and juxtaposing them with American ones, as theories of realism and essentialism in pedagogy. Moreover, by adopting this point of view and focusing on Western pedagogical thought the author was able to avoid any detailed considerations on socialist or soviet pedagogy and their political involvement. From the point of view of the scientific objectivity principle his remarks on the soviet system and its educational solutions are however questionable in that due to their internal consistency based on Marxist philosophy and socialist humanism, according to Sośnicki, they were readily borrowed by the representatives of pedagogical realism [48].

He believed that pedagogy is a philosophical science and it should use not only a precise formal analysis of its conceptual apparatus, but also consider the studied phenomena in the context of a structure, a part which they are form of, and adopt a comparative approach [49]. In his study in the field of comparative education, *Development of Western Pedagogy at the Turn of 19th and 20th Century*, the author claimed that the title might be misleading and suggest history of education as its content. His aim was however to compare various education systems and trends, the most typical for the period given, and the historical frame for these considerations was supposed to present the changes of the education processes over the previous three generations in a more complex manner [50].

Sośnicki emphasized the role and proper selection of disciplines auxiliary to the science of education. He mentioned biology, psychology and sociology, in general. However pedagogy as a philosophical science was aimed at educating in order to create a specific view of life which is derived from philosophy. His conclusion is that taking into consideration the pluralistic nature of philosophy, we cannot indicate fully integrated education systems as a uniform manner of perceiving the subject of pedagogical research because of their complex nature simply does not exist [51]. Similarly, education researchers use different methods, according to the scientific trends they represent naturalistic pedagogy is based on empirical methods, as observation and experiment, while humanistic pedagogy adopts rational methods derived from philosophical assumptions [52].

## 7 Mieczysław Pęcherski's comparative research

Mieczysław Pęcherski was a Polish pedagogue, professor of the University of Warsaw, specializing in the studies over educational systems. He was born in 1908 in Ruda in Poland. He studied Polish philology and pedagogy at the University of Warsaw. After graduating from both field, he passed the state exam for a secondary school teacher. We worked as a Polish teacher in gymnasiums. During the Nazi occupation, he was engaged in secret teaching in Warsaw and Białystok. In 1961 he obtained a PhD degree in comparative education. Since 1972 he worked as a professor at the Faculty of Pedagogy and Psychology of the University of Warsaw. He was an honorary member of the Comparative Education Society in Europe (CESE). Professor Pęcherski died in Warsaw in 1986 [53]. Pęcherski's scientific activities were mainly focused on comparative education and didactics of Polish.

Pęcherski's contribution to development of Polish comparative education is significant, nevertheless his publications were not devoid of ideological judgments. Pęcherski published a series of monographs about education in the Eastern bloc countries [54], pointing to their original organizational solutions. Regarding the reluctance of the People's Republic of Poland towards capitalist countries, it was preferred to publish studies on education in the socialist states, while the monographs describing systems of education in the Western Europe were censored. In the time of the People's Republic of Poland, Pęcherski was an expert in the educational systems but mainly of those countries which were friends with the Soviet Unions. Development of education in the People's Republic of Poland was subordinated to the main political and social tasks undertaken by the state.

However, the most important one was to build the socialist society and the school was perceived as an institution that influenced the citizens for the longest time. This enormous pressure was placed on education which was meant to shape positive attitudes towards the socialist system. The authorities of the People's Republic of Poland preparing a reform of education in 1960s, were willing to sought advice from experts who were involved in scientific analyses of other educational systems. Nevertheless, they expected that first of all the positive sides of education in socialist states will be shown, and solutions employed in the Western European schools will be criticized.

It is worth mentioning that Pęcherski determined the contemporary comparativism as "education policy", which he considered to be one of the disciplines of political science [55]. The subject of studies over education policy recognized in this manner was scientific reflection over political activity, planning and anticipating of changes in the field of education. The education policy is an element of state activity and special bodies which aim at defining the main assumptions, functions and structure of the system of education and at planning its development through the appointment of qualified staff.

## 8 Conclusion

To conclude we should emphasize that Polish pedagogues who contributed to the development of this subdiscipline within the field of science of education, recognized the importance of educational problems and educational reforms in other countries. The beginning of these analyses and debates that started in Europe in 19th century found its fertile ground and followers, particularly in such countries as Poland of that time, as it did not exist as an independent political and administrative being - historical circumstances made the Polish territory divided between its neighbours. During this partition period, Polish thinkers, educators and social activists perceived foreign educational initiatives as useful models to be introduced in free Poland in the future while creating a national education system. For the similar reason plenty of publications of this type were published in Poland in the interwar period, when the country regained its political independence and started to build institutions in the new reality of a democratic republic.

The greatest interest in comparative education however began in Poland in the 1960s, it proved that Polish researchers were familiar with international trends in educational research - second half of 20th century was a period of highly dynamic development of this area of studies, particularly in the US where the most influential research center was located at the Teachers College of Columbia University. The reason was the general situation in education in the United States, which prompted both the rulers and a large part of public opinion to carefully look at the educational processes and the level of education on the Old Continent. On this basis, attempts were made to assess the strengths and weaknesses of the American school in order to increase its effectiveness and quality of teaching [56]. Academic comparisons between the educational systems in the world, particularly US and Soviet Russia, were also based on the political, military and economic competition among those countries and the ideological blocks they formed.

A political context of the Polish comparativists' work and the influence of ideology on their scientific activity was also one of the main characteristics of the research trends. Emphasizing cultural, scientific and education supremacy of the USSR over the rest of the world might suggest that Polish scholars were ardent advocates of the soviet political and social system. Although many of them supported the system and took advantage of it, the reasons for that might however be much more ambiguous. The reality of Poland and Middle-Eastern Europe in the post-war period must be taken into consideration. The researchers, scholars, people of science or culture were expected to support the system and the ruling party, otherwise they would not be able not only to continue their activities, but they might have become the victims of repression of the regime. Hence, plenty of authors included some ideological remarks in their publications in order to avoid the risk of political persecution and to get simply the chance to publish their works. It was a kind of a game in numerous cases, a game that was transparent for other members of a scientific community and their readers - they were perfectly aware that some parts of the works published could have been omitted, as they were not vital for the main author's argument presented. Despite the political restrictions, numerous academicians were ready to take the risk and to make an effort to perform their scientific activities according to the standards recognized by an international scientific community.

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