

# UN-EQUAL WOMEN IN THE SYSTEM OF EDUCATION AGAINST THE EQUALITY TRANSFORMATION IN TODAY'S POLAND

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**Resumo:** No artigo são abordadas as questões regulamentares relativas aos direitos das mulheres na Polónia depois de 1989, em particular, no que diz respeito ao sistema de ensino e formação. O ponto de partida é a identificação das leis que se aplicam para a eliminação da discriminação na educação e na eliminação em todos os níveis de ensino de conceitos estereotipados relativos à posição das mulheres e dos homens. Ao mesmo tempo, baseando-se na análise de dados estatísticos, e numa pesquisa da literatura do assunto assim como nas fontes normativas de educação e da política de anti-discriminação, as autoras mostram tanto o sistema de ensino na Polónia quanto a posição das mulheres neste sistema. Os estudos realizados indicam que, apesar da feminização da profissão docente, a estrutura de emprego constitui uma pirâmide onde as mulheres continuam a ocupar a posição mais baixa. Um dos fatores que contribuem para esta situação é o conteúdo de livros didáticos. Como mostra a análise, a maioria deles são incompatíveis com as disposições do direito internacional, que impõe medidas para eliminar os papéis sociais estereotipados. O estudo também incluiu a questão da especificidade do género nas atitudes e abordagens dos docentes em relação aos alunos. **Palavras-chave:** Direitos das mulheres; Igualdade; Proibição de discriminação em razão do sexo; Educação das mulheres.

**Abstract:** This article addresses the issue of legal regulations in the matter of women's rights in Poland after 1989, especially with reference to the educational system. The starting point is the traceability of the rules of law which refer to the eradication of discrimination in the area of education and the elimination of stereotypical concepts concerning the position of women and men on every level of education. Simultaneously, on the basis of the analysis of statistical data as well as the study of the primary sources and normative references in the subject of education and anti-discrimination policy, the authors show both the system of education in Poland and the women's position within that system. The conducted research points to the fact that despite the feminization of the teaching profession, the employment structure is of pyramidal character in which women still hold the lowest ranked positions. One of the factors affecting this situation is the content of school textbooks. As the analysis shows, the majority of textbooks are inconsistent with the provisions of the international law, which impose an obligation to act in favor of the eradication of stereotypical approach to social roles. The study also takes into account the issue of the gender-specific teachers' attitude and approach towards students.

**Keywords:** Women's rights; Gender equality; Prohibition of discrimination on grounds of gender; Education of women.

## THE LEGAL SITUATION OF WOMEN IN POLAND

The legal status and the situation of women in Poland is determined both by the international law, the European regulations and the national legislations<sup>1</sup>. The women's

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<sup>1</sup> JĘDRZEJOWSKA, 2008: 200.

rights<sup>2</sup> constitute an integral part of the international human rights law. They have been affirmed in a number of international conventions as well as in constitutional laws of particular states; nevertheless, sex-based discrimination<sup>3</sup> still exists in the present-day world<sup>4</sup>. One of the fundamental regulations regarding this matter is The Charter of the United Nations signed in 1945 which confirmed the principle of equality between women and men. The successive international documents to which Poland is a party, regarding the issues relating to gender equality are: the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women<sup>5</sup>, and the European Convention of Human Rights. Other conventions and legal regulations concerning the women's rights include: the Convention on the Political Rights of Women, the Convention of the Nationality of Married Women, the UNESCO Convention against Discrimination in Education, the ILO Convention No. 100 concerning Equal Remuneration for Men and Women Workers and the Convention No. 111 concerning Discrimination in Respect of Employment and Occupation. Moreover, it should be emphasized that the initial legal documents of the international law, first and foremost, addressed the issues of personal liberty for women and the abolition of slavery (human trafficking, including women), namely the Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Women and Children, The Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Women of Full Age, the Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Persons and of the Exploitation of the Prostitution of Others<sup>6</sup>.

Furthermore, particular attention should be paid to the European Union regulations relating to the problem of gender equality and the prohibition of unfair discrimination on the grounds of gender expressed, among others, in the Charter of Fundamental Rights of December 18, 2000<sup>7</sup> or in the so-called «Equality Directives»<sup>8</sup>.

<sup>2</sup> It is about the women's rights as compared to the men's rights and their protection as a discriminated group, being in the position of a «minority group», i.e. in a «worse-off position». FUSZARA, 2006: 29. As noticed by E. Łętowska, this is highlighting women's situation against male population. The recognition of women's situation as a weaker group, worse treated and requiring protection as compared to the standard group, which is used as a point of reference, that is men. ŁĘTOWSKA, 2011: 26.

<sup>3</sup> The term «discrimination against women» shall mean «any distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of sex which has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by women, irrespective of their marital status, on a basis of equality of men and women, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field» Article 1 of the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women of December 18, 1979, which entered into force on September 3, 1981.

<sup>4</sup> KONDRATIEWA-BRYZIK & SOKOLEWICZ, 2011: 11-13.

<sup>5</sup> The Convention of December 18, 1979 entered into force on September 3, 1981 and ratified by Poland on July 30, 1980 (Journal of Laws «Dz.U.» 1982, No. 10, item 71), later called The Charter of Fundamental Rights of Women.

<sup>6</sup> JABŁOŃSKI & JAROSZ-ŻUKOWSKA, 2010: 207.

<sup>7</sup> Article 20 of the Charter (the principle of equality before the law) and Article 21 of the Charter (the principle of non-discrimination). In BUJALSKI & BŁĘDZKI, 2008: 361.

<sup>8</sup> I.a. Council Directive 86/613/EEC of December 11, 1986 on the application of the principle of equal treatment between men and women engaged in an activity, including agriculture, in a self-employed capacity and on the protection of self-employed women during pregnancy and motherhood (Official Journal of the European Communities L 359 of December 19, 1986), Council Directive 2000/78/EC of November 27, 2000 establishing a general framework for equal treatment in employment and occupation, Council Directive 2004/113/EC of December 13, 2004 implementing the principle of equal treatment between men and women in the access to and supply of goods and services, Directive 2006/54/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of July 5, 2006 on the implementation of the principle of equal opportunities and equal treatment of men and women in matters of employment and occupation.

The protection of women's rights, as considered in the relevant literature, is based on several interplaying levels, that is to affirm equal rights for men and women relating to all aspects of life, to grant special rights due to psychobiological factors and social functions of women, and to grant such forms of power which will provide equal opportunities in exercising women's rights (affirmative action and equal protection)<sup>9</sup>.

Therefore, both international and local regulations<sup>10</sup> attempt in a complex manner to define the women's rights, imposing, at the same time, on countries the obligation to assure equality between women and men before the law by taking all necessary measures to eliminate discrimination against women in political and public life as well as in economic and social life<sup>11</sup>. Also, the Polish legislature provides for the legal regulations and institutions aimed at guaranteeing gender equality.

It worth underlining here that Poland was one of the first states, for it was as early as in 1918, which granted women the right to vote<sup>12</sup>. It should be pointed out that it was the very idea of giving women the same voting rights as men which became a cornerstone on a pathway to gender equality and to the legal and social status of women<sup>13</sup>. Besides, Article 96 of the Constitution of 1921 stipulated that «All citizens shall be held equal before the law»<sup>14</sup>. Simultaneously, it was not until in the Polish People's Republic Constitution of 1952 that the constitutional guarantees of equality between men and women were explicitly affirmed<sup>15</sup>.

Currently, in the Polish law, the principle of equality of women and men is a constitutional principle. It was represented *expressis verbis* in Article 33 of the Constitution of the Republic of Poland of 1997<sup>16</sup> which says that:

1. *Men and women shall have equal rights in family, political, social and economic life in the Republic of Poland.*

2. *Men and women shall have equal rights, in particular, regarding education, employment and promotion, and shall have the right to equal remuneration for work of equal value, to social security, to hold offices, and to receive public honors and decorations.*

Moreover, the constitutional provisions emphasize the equality before the law and prohibit all forms of discrimination «in political, social and economic life for any reason

<sup>9</sup> JABŁOŃSKI & JAROSZ-ZUKOWSKA, 2010: 207.

<sup>10</sup> I.a. European Council regulations and Community provisions.

<sup>11</sup> ŁOPATKA, 1998: 82.

<sup>12</sup> Decree of Head of State on the electoral law to Legislative Sejm of November 28, 1918 according to Article 1, «an Elector for the Sejm are all citizens irrespective of their gender...» (Journal of Laws of the Polish State No. 18, item 46).

<sup>13</sup> More on this in: KONDRATIEWA-BRYZIK & SOKOLEWICZ, 2011: 346.

<sup>14</sup> Article 96 of the Constitution of March 17, 1921 (Journal of Laws «Dz.U.» of 1921, No. 44, item 267), Constitutions of the Republic of Poland of 1997, 1952, 1935, 1952, Kolonia Ltd, Milicz 2001, p. 27. It should be added that no such regulations existed in the Constitution of 1935.

<sup>15</sup> Article 66 of the Constitution of the Polish People's Republic of July 22, 1952 stipulated that «women and men in the Polish People's Republic have equal rights in all areas of national, political, economic, social and cultural life», (i.e. Journal of Laws «Dz.U.» of 1976, No. 7, item 36), Ibidem: 28.

<sup>16</sup> Constitution of the Republic of Poland of April 2, 1997 (Journal of Laws «Dz.U.» of 1997, No. 78, item 483).

whatsoever»<sup>17</sup>. Although there is no mention of any particular examples or kinds of discrimination in the Article 32 of the Constitution cited above, it may be assumed that the scope of this term undoubtedly includes sex-based discrimination. At the same time, as part of promotion and guarantee of equality between women and men, a number of regulations governing this matter was implemented into the Polish legislation. An example of this are the regulations relating to the issue of employment. The Polish Labor Code in Chapter IIa (Article 18<sup>3a</sup>-18<sup>3e</sup>)<sup>18</sup> explicitly prohibits any form, both direct and indirect, of gender-based discrimination regarding employment<sup>19</sup>.

The legal status of women within their family and marital position<sup>20</sup> is defined by the Polish Family and Guardianship Code<sup>21</sup> and by general constitutional principles in the matter of protection offered to married couples, families, motherhood and parenthood<sup>22</sup>, the protection of private and family life<sup>23</sup> and the right of parents to raise children according to their own convictions<sup>24</sup>. As it can be seen from the above-mentioned provisions, a broader protection in this regard is provided to married couples, which translates into the protection of women living in cohabitational relationships.

What is more, undoubtedly a great importance on the way to gender equality has the Act of December 3, 2010, entered into force on 2011<sup>25</sup>, on the implementation of some of the regulations of the European Union regarding equal treatment<sup>26</sup>. This Act defines the areas and ways of prevention of equal treatment breach, including gender-based treatment, introducing legal definitions of discrimination (both direct and indirect) and enacting security measures against unequal treatment<sup>27</sup>.

As part of institutionalized assurance of compliance with equal opportunity laws, an Office of the Government Representative for Equal Status of Women and Men was set up in December of 2001 which in the years 2001-2005 was responsible for the policy regarding equal treatment of women and men and the anti-discrimination policy. After the liquidation of the Representative's Office, the tasks assigned to him were shifted to the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy and Poland had become the only one European Union state which for three years did not hold a separate office responsible for the policy on gender equality. In 2008, a Government Representative for Equal Treatment<sup>28</sup> was appointed

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<sup>17</sup> Article 32 of the Constitution of the Republic of Poland.

<sup>18</sup> Act of June 26, 1974 Labor Code (Journal of Laws «Dz.U.», i.e. 1974, No. 24, item 171).

<sup>19</sup> JĘDRZEJOWSKA, 2008: 201-202.

<sup>20</sup> As emphasized in the literature and the doctrine, the women's rights must not constitute the derivative of family rights or be identified with issues related to motherhood only.

<sup>21</sup> Act of February 25, 1964 Family and Guardianship Code (Journal of Laws «Dz.U.», i.e. 1964, No. 9, item 59).

<sup>22</sup> Article 18 of the Constitution of the Republic of Poland.

<sup>23</sup> Article 47 of the Constitution of the Republic of Poland.

<sup>24</sup> Article 48 of the Constitution of the Republic of Poland.

<sup>25</sup> A description of the course of legislative process for the draft bill on equal status of women and men at [www.orka.sejm.gov.pl/proc4.nsf/opisy/1313.htm](http://www.orka.sejm.gov.pl/proc4.nsf/opisy/1313.htm) [access online: 22.10.2014].

<sup>26</sup> Act of December 3, 2010 on the implementation of some of the regulations of the European Union regarding equal treatment, the so-called Equal Treatment Act (Journal of Laws «Dz.U.» of 2010 No. 254, item 1700).

<sup>27</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>28</sup> Since August 1, 2014, the Representative is Małgorzata Fuszara. More on the characteristics and function of the Representative's profession can be found in: KONDRATIEWA-BRYZIK & SOKOLEWICZ, 2011: 310 and Article 20 of Equal Treatment Act.

who, after the Act on Equal Treatment has taken effect, deals along with the Commissioner for the Protection of Civil Rights with the matters of the equality policy<sup>29</sup>.

Thus, the issues relating to women's rights, which are most frequently raised and are most problematic, include the right to bodily integrity and autonomy, to active and passive voting, to perform public functions, to work, to serve in the military, to freedom in family, parental and religious matters, to just remuneration equal with men, and to education. It is these issues relating to education of women which are going to be more widely discussed later in this article. The right to women's education is granted by both the international<sup>30</sup> and domestic<sup>31</sup> law. The legal regulations are aimed at the elimination of discrimination in the area of education and school system by way of assuring on an equal footing with men, among other things, the elimination of teaching on every level the stereotypical concepts concerning the position of women and men, ensuring equal opportunities through providing access to school and professional curricula, facilitating the choice of a profession, the access to schools and higher education programs<sup>32</sup>.

## WOMEN IN THE SYSTEM OF EDUCATION

As Catherine Marry points out:

*The legal barriers limiting access for girls to successive stages of educational hierarchy were still moving by leaps and bounds – that process was taking place at a different pace in different countries, but everywhere it was moving in the same direction: from elementary schools (in the first half of the 19th century) to universities and other schools of higher education (from the 60s in the 19th century to the 70s in the 20th century)*<sup>33</sup>.

Gaining equal access to education by women was a very important social phenomenon on the territory of Poland. Similarly to the political and citizens' rights, the process of obtaining rights to education was spread over many years. The situation was also complicated by the political location of the Polish territories, partitioned in 1795 by three invaders. Each of those states (Russia, Austria and Prussia), having separate legal and education systems, carried them over onto the territory which had been annexed as a result of the partition. The right to attend universities was granted to women following years-long attempts and after breaking a hostile attitude of the public. The year 1894 is considered a crucial date for the territory of Poland. In pursuance of the regulations on the right

<sup>29</sup> More on the comments on the Equal Treatment Act and the criticism of the accepted solutions therein, including, among others, the powers of the Commissioner of Civil Rights Protection regarding this matter and not to appoint independent and autonomous authority for equal treatment in KONDRATIEWA-BRYZIK & SOKOLEWICZ, 2011: 305-313.

<sup>30</sup> I.a. the UNESCO Convention against Discrimination in Education or The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

<sup>31</sup> I.e. pursuant to Article 4 the scope of the Equal Treatment Act includes, among other things, education and higher education, and also «undertaking vocational training, including additional training, professional development programs...».

<sup>32</sup> See the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

<sup>33</sup> MARRY, 2007: 561.

to lesson observation, women were given individual permissions by the Senate of Jagiellonian University to attend lectures. However, it was only in 1897 that they obtained the right to take examinations and to be awarded diplomas<sup>34</sup>. Women also eagerly used other available opportunities of broadening their knowledge, including Higher Courses for Women in Cracow set up in 1868, an underground Flying University functioning in the Russian Sector of Poland in the years 1886-1905, there adding of the Polish Education Association and Academic Courses for Women in Lviv<sup>35</sup>. Even though in 1918 women achieved formal political and social equality, their access to education was far from being equal. The limited access to education, in turn, excluded women from numerous and essential aspects of life, and their professional career prospects and participation in politics were restricted.

At present, the main document relating to education in Poland is the *Act on the Education System* of September 7, 1997. The Recitals of that Act point to the goals and principles of education: «Teaching and learning – respecting the Christian system of values – is based on universal ethical principles»<sup>36</sup>. As the authors of the *Women in Poland 2003 Report* notice, this provision strengthens the gender-related stereotypes and, in practice, leads to women's discrimination in the education system:

*[...] though other goals and principles described in the Recitals seem to assure the openness to other ethical and intellectual traditions; in practice, however, especially when it comes to the question of gender equality, this seemingly inconspicuous passage plays a key role in the Government's educational policy*<sup>37</sup>.

According to E. Górnikowska-Zwolak, these Recitals are the only statutory record of such an explicit quality in the whole European Union<sup>38</sup>. It is also worth noting that it was not until 2010, that the term «uczennica» (a female student) began to be used in Polish schools. It was only after the implementation of the Minister of National Education Regulation of August 20, 2010 that the distinction between masculine and feminine terms was introduced<sup>39</sup>.

In spite of the fact that today the same attention is paid to the education of both girls and boys, it is the girls who tend to be encouraged to participate in empathy developing activities, which, in turn, results in their succeeding at school, though not in those areas which in the future will guarantee them successful careers and high social status<sup>40</sup>. Later

<sup>34</sup> PERKOWSKA, 1989.

<sup>35</sup> MAZURCZAK, 1995: 184-187.

<sup>36</sup> Consolidated text of the Act on the System of Education of September 7, 1991: 3.

<sup>37</sup> DOMINICZAK & WÓYCICKA, 2003: 97.

<sup>38</sup> GÓRNIKOWSKA-ZWOLAK, 2005: 173-199.

<sup>39</sup> There is an entry, among others, which allows the use of the terms – «zwolniony»/«zwolniona» («excused», e.g. absence or «exempt», e.g. from a course, incorporating both masculine and feminine inflexion); Minister of National Education Regulation of August 20, 2010 amending the Regulation on the conditions and rules for students assessment, eligibility for assessment and promotion, and for conducting tests and examinations in public schools; Journal of Laws «Dz.U.» No. 156, item 1046.

<sup>40</sup> MARRY, 2007: 563.

on, this is reflected in the choice of school and the direction of study, as well as the choice of a college and a university major. Girls comprise the majority of students in grammar high schools, and in the school year 2013–2014, they accounted for 62% of students attending those schools. In senior high schools of art, girls accounted for 75% of students and in specialized high schools (nowadays these schools are gradually being closed), girls accounted for 69% of students. The majority of them, as many as 86%, attend socially oriented classes, 72% study environment management, 75% chose miscellaneous services, whereas 73% took up art classes. In technical high schools, girls accounted for 40% of students. The largest number of them studied miscellaneous services (76%), social studies (75%), sciences (73%), veterinary medicine (72%), environmental protection (64%), medicine (61%), and economics and administration (54%). The smallest number of girls study engineering and technology, and computer science. In basic vocational schools, girls account for 24% (most of them study miscellaneous services)<sup>41</sup>. As it can be observed from the summary presented above, girls are more prone to choose these educational profiles which require humanistic competence, whereas boys those requiring scientific competence. This correlation can also be observed in the labor market<sup>42</sup> as well as in the choice of post-secondary and college or university courses. In the academic year 2013–2014, women accounted for 58% of university students. In medical universities – 75%, and in humanistic and art schools – 71%, in economics schools – 63%. In pedagogical programs, women comprise 80% of students, which creates a situation where one of the essential problems is, among other things, achieving a structural equality in the teaching profession. This would facilitate the avoidance of feminization of this profession, where about 80% of employees are women<sup>43</sup>, as well as the formation of a pyramid at the base of which, being at the lowest level of the school hierarchy, a great number of women are placed, whereas at its top, at the highest levels, women are scarce. The lowest number of women studied in national defense universities and in the schools of internal affairs and administration<sup>44</sup>. Also, as the public opinion polls show, women attach great importance to education. Parents consider good education of their daughters to be more important than it is in the case of their sons<sup>45</sup>. An important role in the process of choosing the type of further education lies in the socialization training which both girls and boys go through. Mariola Chomczyńska-Rubacha describes this correlation in the following way:

*If girls have some socialization experience based on the flexible definition of a gender role and they have been, for instance, put through the training of thinking similar to the one boys go through (e.g. playing with toy blocks or playing chess), their disadvantage in high school, viewed*

<sup>41</sup> Available in <http://stat.gov.pl/obszary-tematyczne/edukacja/edukacja/oswiata-i-wychowanie-w-roku-szkolnym-2013-2014,1,8.html> [Access online: 02.03.2015].

<sup>42</sup> CHOMCZYŃSKA-RUBACHA, 2011: 118–119.

<sup>43</sup> Oświata i wychowanie w roku szkolnym 2013/2014, Warsaw 2014. Available in <http://stat.gov.pl/obszary-tematyczne/edukacja/edukacja/oswiata-i-wychowanie-w-roku-szkolnym-20132014,1,8.html> [Access online: 02.03.2015].

<sup>44</sup> Available in <http://stat.gov.pl/obszary-tematyczne/edukacja/edukacja/szkoly-wyzsze-i-ich-finanse-w-2013-r-,2,10.html> [Access online: 03.03.2015].

<sup>45</sup> FUSZARA, 2006: 61.

*in the context of boys' achievements, is statistically speaking, virtually non-existent [...]. If, however, girls went through a stereotypical socialization training in their childhood [...], then, as early as in junior high school do they shift her interests from scientific to the more «family oriented». They cease to be so eagerly engaged in mathematics and technical subjects, they weave their future as working or non-working mothers<sup>46</sup>.*

Even though, at present, there is an equal access to education, the other elements of inequality have not been removed from the education process, especially when it comes to gender stereotypes which are passed down to children. The shaping of stereotypes by the institutions, such as schools, occurs in several ways. The first mechanism results from the very content of school courses. The second mechanism is the effect of school functioning as a place where people meet and, as a part of their mutual relations, they either reinforce or break those stereotypes. Of course, the process of passing on stereotypes occurs from the earliest years spent in family and childhood environment. This means that parents will to a large extent decide on the direction of education for their children<sup>47</sup>. Magdalena roda, in an interview for *Gazeta Wyborcza* (a Polish daily newspaper), described this issue as follows:

*More demands are made on the boy. From the perspective of later life, worse demands are put on the girl because she is told that she must be pretty, nice, she must smell good and be obedient. The boy is faced with higher demands, which causes men to be more exposed to stress: they must be strong individuals, be responsible and hold managerial positions. My mother did not demand a lot from me, it was rather me who was more demanding for my daughter, Agatha. I always told her to be speak more quietly because she was a girl, to assume a different sitting position because she was a girl. So, Agatha herself started to lecture me: 'You talk to me as if I was a girl, not a child'<sup>48</sup>.*

The discrimination in the education process manifests itself, for example, in the division of the scope of learning materials in some fields of study, such as technical subjects or computer science. For example, there is a lack of specialized computer software for girls studying ICT<sup>49</sup>. There is also a gender segregation sustained in some classes, like PE lessons, for instance, even though in the majority of the European countries this division has already been abandoned<sup>50</sup>.

Teachers and their inner attitude play a very important role in the way subjects are typically perceived as either feminine or masculine. The image of a girl and a boy, a female and a male student, which they keep translates into real forms of behavior and demands placed on children. Mariola Chomczyńska-Rubacha in her work *Gender and*

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<sup>46</sup> CHOMCZYŃSKA-RUBACHA, 2011: 121-122.

<sup>47</sup> SIEMIENSKA, 2001: 13.

<sup>48</sup> Ateistka. Rozmowa z Magdaleną Śródą, filozofem i etykiem; *Gazeta Wyborcza* No. 9, DUŻY FORMAT, *Gazeta Wyborcza* No. 49 insert, issued on 28/02/2005: 4.

<sup>49</sup> DOMINICZAK & WÓYCICKA, 2003: 100.

<sup>50</sup> DOMINICZAK & WÓYCICKA, 2003: 39-41, 112.



*School. From Gender Education to Pedagogy of Gender* presents the results of the research studies on the relation between teachers' expectations and the level of school, which were conducted in different countries of the European-American culture. They show that children's achievements are varied depending on their sex. They depend, for example, on their age and their socio-economic situation. Elementary school, as being more discipline-oriented, is more conducive to girls. It values proper behavior, politeness and conformity. High school, on the other hand, is defined as androcentric. As opposed to elementary school, it is there that knowledge, competence and work count more, even if they are achieved at the expense of worse grades received for conduct<sup>51</sup>. Boys are being paid more attention to, they are quizzed more often, and they are allowed to speak more often in class, especially in math and science lessons. Boys are better at map reading, so they are more frequently quizzed on map reading. Girls tend to speak in these classes more often about matters referring to keeping order and discipline<sup>52</sup>.

An important area which generates inequality of opportunities between women and men is the content of school books. In spite of the fact that Poland is a signatory to the UN Convention against Discrimination in Education, the majority of Polish school books do not comply with its provisions, which impose an obligation to act in such manner as to eliminate the social roles which are traditionally assigned to both sexes. Already at the time of the first education reforms following the year 1989, the changes, viewed in the context of the European Union's recommendations, as part of *gender mainstreaming*, were insignificant. The school got rid of its ideological character but, at the same time, there was a turn into the direction of the conservative values<sup>53</sup>. In 2005, by order of the Government Representative for Equal Status of Men and Women Office, Anna Wołosik carried out the analysis of curricula and history and civics textbooks for various types of schools. The observations she made lead to the conclusions that most of them present a traditional way of perceiving the roles of women, and a stereotypical picture of the family, which consists of mother and father, with two children of the opposite sex. There is no mention of other life patterns in those books. There are no partnership-based families, broken homes, single mothers or fathers, or families separated because of the economic migration, for example. The stereotypical textbook family does not argue, nor does it have any financial problems. The author also draws attention to the masculinization of language commonly used in textbooks<sup>54</sup>. A characteristic and a commonplace phenomenon in textbook writing is a lack of presence of women in many aspects of life; for exam-

<sup>51</sup> CHOMCZYŃSKA-RUBACHA, 2011: 121-122.

<sup>52</sup> See, among others: MAZURKIEWICZ, 2006; CHOMCZYŃSKA-RUBACHA, 2004; PANKOWSKA, 2005; MAJEWSKA & RUTKOWSKA, 2008.

<sup>53</sup> Ateistka. Rozmowa z Magdaleną Środą, filozofem i etykiem; Gazeta Wyborcza No. 9, DUŻY FORMAT, Gazeta Wyborcza No. 49 insert, issued on 28/02/2005: 49.

<sup>54</sup> WOŁOSIK, Edukacja do równości czy trening uległości. Czy polskie podręczniki respektują zasadę równości płci? Available in [http://www.bezuprzedzen.org/doc/edukacja\\_do\\_rownosci.pdf](http://www.bezuprzedzen.org/doc/edukacja_do_rownosci.pdf) [Access online: 04.03.2015]. See also Cesarzowa ero tomanka. Równość płci w podręcznikach szkolnych. Rozmowa z Anną Wołosik, Interview conducted by Aneta Górnicka-Boratyńska, WYSOKIE OBCASY No. 25 Gazeta Wyborcza No. 146 insert, issued on 25/06/2005: 38. Available in <http://www.wysokieobcasy.pl/wysokie-obcasy/1,53581,2780465.html> [Access online: 04.03.2015].

ple, women are not presented as the creators of culture but rather as its objects. Also, authors much less frequently present women's influence on politics or their contribution to science<sup>55</sup>.

In women's biographies, the information which is not present in the biographies of men, such as that which refers to looks, education, or sexual preferences, appears quite commonly. One of the reasons for this might be the fact that the Polish model of history education is still based on the predominance of political history and the history of war in which women accounted for a minor part. On the other hand, those areas of life in which women appeared more often – such as the history of everyday life, family history, or economic history are put aside. Some changes were brought in by the new core curriculum introduced to senior high schools in 2012, where within the course of history and civics titled Heritage of Epochs as the main theme appears: The Woman, the Man, and the Family<sup>56</sup>.

In the Polish literature textbooks, the mother appears in a traditional role of a housewife and family caregiver. Her activities are concentrated around satisfying basic needs. The women presented at work represent those jobs which are common among them. They do not hold public positions, nor do they practice professions associated with power and prestige. Men, on the other hand, are the organizers of family life – they plan games and fun activities, they are the knowledge providers for their children. They barely participate in household activities. There are a lot of negative comments regarding the school subject called «Preparation for Family Life», which was introduced as a substitute for sex education in 1993. As emphasized by Magdalena roda and Ewa Rutkowska:

*Here are some examples taken from two course books which were published in a large number of copies: «Write down the features commonly associated with men and those typically associated with women. Whose notebooks and textbooks are generally neater and whose are in worse condition?» Exercise: «Answer the questions and justify if the following situations: (a) marrying a woman only because she's pregnant; (b) falling in love and marrying a single woman with a child, fit into the definition of personal love»<sup>57</sup>.*

This model is presented in school not only through the official media by using textbooks and teaching programs, but also through a personal development program, presented, for instance, at special school events:

*One of the oliborz's (a district in Warsaw) elementary schools organized a performance for a recent Mother's Day in which a dialogue between an angel and God agonizing over the creation of mother takes place. «I am creating a perfect mother, so there's a lot of work to do. Just*

<sup>55</sup> See WOŁOSIK, Edukacja do równości czy trening uległości. Czy polskie podręczniki respektują zasadę równości płci? MAZUR, 2002: 235-254; HOSZOWSKA, 2004: 251-264; SZYMCZAK, 2010.

<sup>56</sup> See Minister of National Education Regulation of December 23, 2008 on the core curriculum for preschool and general education in particular types of schools, Journal of Laws «Dz. U.» No. 4, item 17 of January 15, 2009.

<sup>57</sup> Ateistka. Rozmowa z Magdaleną Środą, filozofem i etykiem; Gazeta Wyborcza No. 9, DUŻY FORMAT, Gazeta Wyborcza No. 49 insert, issued on 28/02/2005: 50-51.

look at her. She must be fit for doing the washing and cleaning, eating leftovers from the previous day», God says. «I've enabled her to recover from illness by herself. She can cook something from nothing, she can manage to hold a nine-year-old boy in the shower». The angel worries that the mother is too fragile and small. [...] So, God creates a partner for her: «A big, strong and wise pioneer». «Who is it? It is a real giant!», the angel marvels. «This is a father – the head of the family», the proud God says. The father has also «a strong but soft voice and peaceful and forgiving eyes» [...] <sup>58</sup>.

Both male and female authors of *The Policy on Gender Equality Report* draw attention to a number of crucial areas where meeting the demands for equality is very significant. The application of the *gender* issues to university programs and organizing equality and anti-discriminatory practice training courses is also a key demand. The research carried out at local and national levels on both male and female students with the use gender-sensitive indicators – for example, that which allows to determine educational preferences, should also become a priority. Also, it is important to create strategies and activities aimed at improving education results and accounting for sex differences, at the same time. Facilitating the active participation of parents in school life as well as teachers' attention to maintaining equal participation of both parents in educational activities is of great significance, as well. It is also necessary to introduce some changes into curricula and textbooks, which would eliminate harmful stereotypes and their pro-discrimination content <sup>59</sup>.

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<sup>58</sup> PODGÓRSKA, 2007: 93.

<sup>59</sup> Ateistka. Rozmowa z Magdaleną Środą, filozofem i etykiem; Gazeta Wyborcza No. 9, DUŻY FORMAT, Gazeta Wyborcza No. 49 insert, issued on 28/02/2005: 53-55.

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