

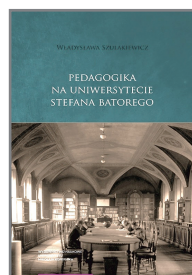
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A Few Words About Vilnius Pedagogy and Its Promoters

Władysława Szulakiewicz, *Pedagogika na Uniwersytecie Stefana Batorego* [Pedagogy at Stefan Batory University], Scientific Publishing House of Nicolaus Copernicus University, Toruń 2019, pp. 215.

It is individuals that make up the history of each scientific discipline (Kąkol, 2002; Dycht, 2006; Meissner & Szulakiewicz, 2008; Żukowski, 2015; Bonusiak, 2019). They not only constitute it, but they also advance it, discover it, look for answers, consider, ponder, discuss, and analyze problems, dilemmas, issues, and topics directly or indirectly related to the discipline. Many names can be tied with the history of the foundation and development of pedagogy in Poland. It is worth recalling here such people as Jan Władysław Dawid, Bogdan Nawroczyński, Sergiusz Hessen, Kazimierz Sośnicki, Maria Grzegorzewska, Helena Radlińska, Janusz Korczak, Kazimierz Twardowski, and many others who performed a great service to Polish education science (Okoń, 2000; Jakubiak & Jamrożek, 2019).

The vast majority of the precursors of Polish pedagogy were affiliated with specific universities, e.g., in Warsaw, Lviv, Krakow, and Poznań. They conducted research and classes for students, and they educated the staff there, were involved in social and charity work,



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and worked for various types of associations and organizations. They were active in many fields. Undoubtedly, it is thanks to the scientific activity of researchers of such stature as Kazimierz Twardowski that the first departments of education were set up at Polish universities, including those in Poznań, Lublin, Warsaw, Krakow, and Vilnius (Hejnicka-Bezwińska, 2018, pp. 47–48). Władysława Szulakiewicz's book, entitled *Pedagogy at Stefan Batory University* (Toruń 2019), discusses the process of the institutionalization of pedagogy and the genesis of the establishment of the pedagogy department in Vilnius.

The release of a publication about Vilnius pedagogy in Toruń should come as no surprise to anyone, as it is Nicolaus Copernicus University that is the heir to the scientific legacy of Stefan Batory University (USB) in Vilnius. It should also be emphasized that for many years Professor Władysława Szulakiewicz has been studying the activities of the Polish scholars affiliated with *Alma Mater Vilnensis* (Szulakiewicz, 1999, 2003, 2010, 2018).

In the introduction to her book, Szulakiewicz confesses that “the idea to carry out an inquiry into pedagogy at Stefan Batory University ... arose during a study trip to Vilnius” (p. 5), out of the need to commemorate the activities of Polish educators and the places connected with them. There were more reasons, such as the 100th anniversary of the reestablishment of Vilnius University and the 60th anniversary of Ludwik Chmaj's death, the first head of USB's pedagogy department. Undoubtedly, one of the principal motives for undertaking this task was the lack of a thorough study on the emergence and development of pedagogy as a subject of teaching and a scientific discipline at USB in the Polish historiography of education sciences. This publication offers the reader “the fullest possible picture of the functioning of USB pedagogy in the interwar period” (p. 6) and of the work of “the founder of Vilnius academic pedagogy” (p. 96)—Marian Massonius—and his successor Ludwik Chmaj.

As an introduction, the author ushers the reader into the world of scientific and educational ideas at Stefan Batory University. She does so by quoting the inaugural speeches of the rectors of Wszechnica Batorowa, as well as the public lectures of its professors. The lectures of the rectors were of particular relevance to the academic community of Vilnius University. We must recall here such prominent figures as Stanisław Pigoń and Aleksander Wóycicki. In their inaugural

speeches, they drew the attention of young people to the momentous and grave issues of the mission of the university or “the vocation of academic youth.” These speeches and lectures were often later published in the periodical *Alma Mater Vilnensis*. This journal was “one of the major student publications rallying the entire academic community of USB” (p. 29). The authors of the texts published in the journal were students, e.g., Czesław Miłosz, as well as esteemed professors. The authors represented many disciplines: literary historians, philosophers, theologians, art historians, and others. The impressiveness of the publishing activity of the Vilnius academic community is evidenced by the more than 40 journals issued by various university bodies. The preserved periodicals are an excellent source of information on the scientific, educational, and social ideas promoted at the university, as well as on the writing output of USB students and professors. With these preliminary thoughts, the author introduces the reader to the scientific realities of university life, and then moves on to the profile and work of Marian Massonius.

Massonius conducted research and classes at *Wszechnica Batorowa* from 1920 to 1932. This seemingly short career at the university, only 12 years, was very productive. Massonius was one of the most extraordinarily active people. He prepared educational curricula, delivered lectures and pedagogical seminars, and carried out a large number of classes which required extensive, often interdisciplinary knowledge. As Władysława Szulakiewicz notes, during Massonius’s classes, “students learned the content of subjects such as the history of education, general pedagogy, school pedagogy, and didactics” (p. 90) and many others. The portrait painted by the author shows a person who is ardent and committed to teaching and science, a zealous social activist, an efficient administrator, and an outstanding educator and philosopher. The work he carried out with great care and passion laid the foundations for establishing a USB pedagogy department a few years later.

The process of appointing a candidate for the first head of the Department of Pedagogy was long and proceeded in accordance with the law established by the then Ministry of Religious Denominations and Public Education. The author gives a detailed account of the entire process of candidate selection. The reader learns that in the Second Polish Republic, the entire academic community gathered

around a given discipline was involved in the nomination process for the position of chairman. Recognized and respected professors not only suggested the names, but also assessed the accomplishments of the future director. Thanks to the author's exhaustive description, the contemporary reader can learn that in the Second Polish Republic, taking over the university chair was an important event in the scientific community, and the elected person had to be approved by at least a significant portion of the university community.

Ludwik Chmaj was appointed the first and last head of the pedagogy department. As Szulakiewicz points out, not everyone agreed with the outcome of the selection. Chmaj headed the department for only one year, but he was actively involved in popularizing pedagogical knowledge. The war prevented this tremendously diligent researcher from continuing the work begun by Marian Massonius. The image of Chmaj sketched by the author's pen is of a committed and dedicated person. Although he was a strict and demanding teacher, "many memories, especially of young scholars, accentuate his extraordinary kindness" (p. 119). Undoubtedly, the pedagogical legacy and personality of Ludwik Chmaj should be remembered and appreciated by contemporary educators as well.

An added value of the book is its annex, in which the author has included excerpts from inaugural speeches, documents, syllabi of classes and seminars conducted by Massonius, and photographs. This will allow the reader to appraise, for example, his didactic work at a pedagogical seminar.

Introducing outlines of these educators at Stefan Batory University in Vilnius and their didactic, scientific, and popularizing pedagogical work undoubtedly fills the gap in scholarly knowledge of the Vilnius education studies of the time and its precursors (although, as the author admits, not yet fully). This short, but enlightening publication may inspire young researchers to further delve into the history of pedagogy at Stefan Batory University.

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