

The Piarists and the Piarist Department of the Commission of National Education Origins, contexts, interpretations

Summary: In the article, the usual emphasis on innovative elements in the description of the characteristics of Stanisław Konarski's educational reform has been contrasted with opinions pointing to the acquiescence, half measures and eclecticism of the undertaken measures. In fact, it was not until the Piarist schools were subjugated to the Commission of National Education (KEN) that their status, objectives and programmes were changed. It has to be borne in mind that until the times of the Commission, any changes the Piarists had proposed regarding education had to be approved by the Order's supervisors and could not expose the Order to conflict with the Church authorities. On their part, the orders saw education only in relation to the piety they lived by and which they desired to instil in others. It impeded the development of science, and the distinguished scholars of the particular orders for a long time could not bring themselves to accept science's autonomy from the faith. The Commission of National Education had removed those barriers to a great extent, continually emphasising the necessity to modernise the programme of education and carefully supervising that process in the schools run by the Piarist Order. What was notable was that by the Commission's recommendations, Piarist colleges began, more distinctly than ever, radiating the Enlightenment ideas. The greater stress on the teaching of mathematical and natural sciences and the promotion of experiments in pure science were reflective of that transformation.

Keywords: Commission of National Education, Piarist Department, Piarist Order

In the schools it opened primarily for poor youth, and soon also in such new elite educational institutions as Collegia Nobilia, the Piarist Order, or Ordo Clericorum Regularium Pauperum Matris Dei Scholarum Piarum (SP), applied its own expertise, but it also drew from various other models. Therefore, the prevalent tendency in the historical research so far to emphasise only one of these aspects offers an oversimplified and sketchy picture. The organisational structure of Piarist schools was an adaptation of the principles underlying the system of the Jesuit Order's schools. It is worthy of note that colleges for secular

youth adopted many of the solutions in terms of the structure and syllabus of the schools for monastic youth, as it was seminaries that were the first colleges. That encouraged giving the political debate about the state a more religious character and reinforced providentialism in the interpretation of history, and the supremacy of theology delayed the reception of modern scientific concepts.

Different views were espoused by the Commission of National Education (KEN, 1773—1794) — the secular educational authority established by the Commonwealth's Parliament after the suppression of the Jesuit Order. The Commission assumed that the education system was to constitute a crucial element of the state's reform. The reform's objective was to educate a generation of Polish people who would be aware of their civic responsibilities and equipped with knowledge that was functional and based on the contemporaneous achievements of science. The Commission's authorities sought to ensure that monks were citizens first, and only then monks, a proposition which faced fairly strong opposition among the Piarists and ex-Jesuits. Relics of the education model created by religious orders were still commonplace in schools¹.

The Piarists would also selectively use syllabi or methods devised by palace schools for page boys, knight academies, *collegia illustria* and universities. They would also look attentively at Protestant gymnasia and academies. Continuous and considerable influence on the activity of Piarist colleges was exerted by private education, shaped by the aspirations of men with wealth and power.

Colleges for nobles (*Collegia Nobilium*) played an important role in the Piarist school system. In terms of ideology, organisation and the syllabi, they were exceptional institutions in the Order's educational system. Being designed for an elite group of young people, they contradicted the principle of free teaching and were expressive of the Piarists' selective attitude towards the egalitarianism they advocated.

It is worth noting that Joseph Calasanz' ideas underlying the Piarists' mission to promulgate education and culture among the poor aroused anxiety among the secular and religious elites that feared disintegration of the social order. However, the Order's next generation, like the Jesuits before them, turned their interest primarily towards the elites. In the historical research into Piarist education, that move is regarded as a departure from Calasanz' ideals on the one hand, but on the other, as following the spirit of democracy espoused by the Order's founder. It is also believed that the confinement of the Piarists' educational mission to elementary schools was imposed on the Order.

¹ *Ustawy Komisji Edukacji Narodowej dla Stanu Akademickiego i na szkoły w krajach Rzeczypospolitej przepisane*, ed. K. Bartnicka, Warsaw, 2015; I. Szybiak, *Szkoła, nauczyciel, wychowanie*, ed. J. Kamińska, A. Fijałkowski, Warsaw, 2016.

Although José de Calasanz (1556—1648), the founder of the Piarist Order, was initially opposed to creating that type of exclusive institutions, he eventually allowed the opening of special classes for noble youth. Collegium Nazarenum was opened in 1630, and Classe dei Nobili, also called Scuola dei Nobili, was opened in 1636 in Florence. It was established because of the pressure by the nobles who demanded that their sons be educated in a separate school and refused to send them to Jesuit schools.

It was Collegium Nazarenum that had become an exemplary scientific and educational facility. The education it offered was meant to reflect the students' social status, emphasise their noble estate identity and pave the way for their lucrative careers. Respecting the existing social order, the estate privileges of the nobles and the power of the ruling class, Calasanz introduced subjects and knightly skills that had been ignored in colleges before. The best Piarist colleges for nobles extolled teaching performed in a recreational way with theatrical activity and physical exercise. The Nazarenum school implemented instruction of fashionable skills, such as dance, fencing and horse riding. Ball games were intended for comprehensive physical exercise as well. It is worth noting that physical exercise, promoted by Vittorino da Feltre, Juan Luis Vives and the Jesuits, but ignored by Joseph Calasanz and neglected in general at Piarist schools, was appreciated at the Collegium Nazarenum. Great care was taken with students' proper recreational activities, hygiene and clothing². Following in the Jesuits' footsteps, in the syllabi of elitist educational facilities, the Piarists were more and more avid in codifying a nobleman's skills seeing in it a way of teaching him good manners and a better moulding of his "looks, gestures and posture"³.

The elite schools, though not so numerous within the extensive network of the Piarist schools, afforded the Order an opportunity to influence the upbringing and education of the sons of the aristocracy, and often, as in the case of Warsaw's Collegium Civilis, of wealthy townsmen (the patriciate)⁴.

The tuition-based boarding schools were reflective of the Order's complex relations with the elites. They brought it closer to emperors (Maria Theresa),

² In January 1730, 10 boys began their education. Four of them embarked on a clerical career, three went on to become secretaries (*segretaria*), and one made a doctor's degree and got the position of a lecturer in Pisa. See: P. Vannucci, *Il Collegio Nazareno (1630—1930)*, Rome, 1930, 85—87, 92; K. Liebreich, "Piarist education in the seventeenth century", *Studi secenteschi* 27, 1986, 76—86.

³ J. Croiset, *Heures et réglemens pour messieurs les pensionnaires des jésuites*, Paris, 1711, 101; G. Vigarello, "Ćwiczyć, grać", in *Historia ciała*, ed. G. Vigarello, transl. T. Stróżyński, 1, Gdańsk, 2011, 232; K. Puchowski, *Jezuickie kolegia szlacheckie Rzeczypospolitej Obojga Narodów. Studium z dziejów edukacji elit*, Gdańsk, 2007, 125—129.

⁴ M. Kinowska, "Osiemnastowieczne szkoły pijarskie w Warszawie", in *Wkład pijarów do nauki i kultury w Polsce XVII—XIX wieku*, ed. I. Stasiewicz-Jasiukowa, Warsaw—Kraków, 1993, 426—429.

kings and princes, bishops, rich and distinguished families — on whose generosity the foundations and schools' success depended. Exemplary educational facilities consolidated the Order's prestige and influence which, owing to public shows, ceremonies, theatre and semi-theatre performances, extended far beyond the school environment, thus allowing the Order to effectively pursue its religious mission. The nature of each school was conditioned by the economic, political and cultural status of their affluent funders. Their common trait was the Order's endeavour to attract a rich clientele.

Writing about the academies for nobles, education historian Stanisław Kot stated: "It was the monks that had created them here and there, above all the Piarists (in Rome — Collegium Nazarenum, in Vienna — the Liechtenstein Academy, and others); the Jesuits, on their part, fettered by their *Ratio studiorum*, could not adapt themselves to the requirements of the new times"⁵. All the same, it has been demonstrated by research that it was the Italian Jesuits that were first to understand the strategic role of colleges for nobles in their bid to exercise control over the education of the elites⁶. They had also outpaced Calasanz' Order in modernising the programme of teaching and upbringing. The Jesuit Order's endeavours also inspired the Theatines, Barnabites, Benedictines, Somascans or Oratorians. Towards the end of the 17th century, it was key educational facilities run by the Jesuits in France that had grown to eminence (Collège Louis-le-Grand in particular) and exerted an influence of a varying degree on the process of transformation of the Order's education system in other European countries. As the historical research in Poland so far has not identified those developments, it is only by proper placing of the educational reforms pursued by the Piarists, Theatines and Jesuits in the Polish—Lithuanian Commonwealth against the European backdrop that the efforts of those orders can be properly assessed, and the achievements of the Commission of National Education objectively and fully appreciated.

Like the Jesuits, the Piarist Order in the Polish—Lithuanian Commonwealth deliberately undertook to educate the noble youth that aspired to pursue political, military or diplomatic careers, but being faithful to the idea of a humanist school, it neglected the teaching of modern languages, law, history, politics or pure sciences.

The indolent monarchs did not urge the Piarists to introduce change, and the Order's centralised structure curbed any initiatives aimed at modifying the syllabus. Deficiencies of Piarist education also resulted from the autonomous educational policies of the particular orders of the supranational Church. Most

⁵ S. Kot, *Historia wychowania. Zarys podręcznikowy*, 1, Lviv, 1934, 350—351.

⁶ G.P. Brizzi, "I Gesuiti e i seminari per la formazione della classe dirigente", in *Dall'isola alla città. I Gesuiti a Bologna*, ed. G.P. Brizzi, A.M. Matteucci, Bologna, 1988, 145—156.

of the bolder efforts to modernise teaching instruction were thwarted by the supervisors and the conformism of their own environment that was smugly stuck in its intellectual routine. It is also worthy of note that devoid of competitors and on their way to official positions and prestige, the sons of nobles would often complete their education in the rhetoric class, and it was the wealthiest that would expand their knowledge and skills by educational journeys (Grand Tour, *peregrinatio academica*, *Kavalierstour*)⁷.

The establishment of the Collegium Nobilium in 1740 by Piarist Stanisław Konarski (1700—1773) was an exemplary elite school for noble youth which required innovative measures. The Piarists' dispute with the Theatines, and particularly with the Jesuits, over the guardianship of noble youth, the threat of their losing influence on the shaping of the elites, as well as the rising need for professionalism in the era of King Augustus III (1696—1763) induced the Order to set up exclusive schools in which the fundamental transformation of Latin secondary education was effected most quickly. The Piarists' autonomous endeavours had no adverse consequences given that they were increasingly aware of their lagging behind in comparison to their exemplary institutions in Western Europe, especially Collegium Nazarenum⁸.

The positive transformation of the education system was influenced by the tradition of individual education of magnate sons and the pedagogical experience gained from the nobles' *convictus* educational facilities, the activity of which, while including the process of education, far exceeded its social functions. The reform of the Piarist schools, and the Jesuit schools alike, can be understood as part of the efforts of the *aggiornamento* in the Roman Catholic Church⁹. Like in Western Europe, the most pressing factor of the transformation was, however, the pressure of the elites. In the Commonwealth, it was not

⁷ J. Black, *The British abroad: The Grand Tour in the eighteenth century*, Stroud, 2003; M. Bratuń, „Ten wykwintry, wykształcony Europejczyk”. *Zagraniczne studia i podróże edukacyjne Michała Jerzego Wandalina Mniszcha w latach 1762—1768*, Opole, 2002; R. Dziegielewski, *Przygotowanie młodzieży do podróży akademickiej w XVI—XVIII wieku (na przykładzie traktatów apodemicznych, w szczególności „Brewiarza apodemicznego” gdańszczanina Samuela Zwickera)*, Gdańsk, 2015; *Staropolskie podróżowanie*, ed. B. Rok, F. Wolański, Kraków, 2016; M. Leibetseder, *Die Kavalierstour. Adelige Erziehungsreisen im 17. und 18. Jahrhundert*, Cologne—Weimar—Vienna, 2004; D. Żołędz-Strzelczyk, *Peregrinatio academica. Studia młodzieży polskiej z Korony i Litwy na akademiach i uniwersytetach niemieckich w XVI i pierwszej połowie XVII wieku*, Poznań, 1996; *Źródła do dziejów staropolskich podróży edukacyjnych*, ed. D. Żołędz-Strzelczyk, M.E. Kowalczyk, Wrocław, 2017.

⁸ K. Puchowski, „Collegium Nobilium Stanisława Konarskiego a elitarne instytucje wychowawcze zakonów nauczających w Europie”, *Wiek Oświecenia* 20, 2004, 11—70.

⁹ B. Leśnodorski, „Komisja Edukacji Narodowej — poczynania inspiratorskie”, *Wiek Oświecenia* 1, 1978, 16. See: W.M. Grabski, „Światopoglądowe podstawy reformy pijarskiej (1750—1754)”, *Przegląd Historyczno-Oświatowy* 27, 1984, 401—428.

so much the monarchs, though, that endorsed the colleges for nobles, but the magnates and the bishops. As they could not so much rely on King Augustus III's support, the enlightened magnate families set out to educate a new elite of the nobility that would enforce the ideas of the state's reform. Their support manifested itself in setting up foundations, making donations or financing foreign studies for young friars, an activity which Bishop Adam Stanisław Grabowski (1698—1766) was particularly famous for¹⁰.

The Piarist colleges for nobles in the Commonwealth represented a reception of the contemporary European educational ideas and institutions; particularly, the Order's schools in Rome and Vienna, which were adapted to the local realities and needs. In the Polish—Lithuanian Commonwealth, however, the Piarists could not count on such kindness, almost generosity, of their own monarchs as that expressed by Empress Maria Theresa and others. On the other hand, neither King Augustus III nor King Stanislaus II Augustus (1732—1798), who was aware of his cultural mission, submitted to the Order, in the form of any forthright command, their own aspirations or demands mobilising the Order to implement more profound changes in the syllabus or organisation than those already undertaken. It seems that the emphasis on innovative elements in the description of the characteristics of Konarski's reforms should be contrasted with opinions pointing to the acquiescence, half measures and eclecticism of the undertaken measures. It was not until the Piarist schools were subjugated to the Commission of National Education that their status, objectives and programmes were changed.

It was the Piarists' ambition to maintain the Collegium Nobilium near the royal majesty, close to the rival educational facilities that were already run there by the Theatines (1737) and Jesuits (1752)¹¹. Warsaw's Collegium Nobilium set up by Stanisław Konarski was the Piarists' best, exemplary, elite educational facility employing the most distinguished teaching staff in the Commonwealth. It is also worth remembering the Order's other elite schools in Vilnius and Lviv that emulated Konarski's Collegium Nobilium¹².

¹⁰ J. Dygdała, *Adam Stanisław Grabowski (1698—1766). Biskup, polityk, mecenas*, Olsztyn, 1994, 126—127.

¹¹ S. Graciotti, "Echa włoskie działalności teatynów i pijarów w Polsce w XVIII wieku", in idem, *Od Renesansu do Oświecenia*, transl. W. Jekiel et al., 2, Warsaw, 1991, 39—56; K. Maksimowicz, "W sprawie Collegium Varsaviense ojców teatynów", in *Europejskie związki dawnego teatru szkolnego i europejska wspólnota dawnych kalendarzy*, ed. I. Kadulska, Gdańsk, 2003, 91—98; K. Puchowski, "Edukacja «losem urodzenia wyznaczonych» w warszawskim kolegium teatynów (1737—1785)", in *Między barokiem a oświeceniem. Sarmacki konterfekt*, ed. S. Achremczyk, Olsztyn, 2002, 79—94.

¹² J. Kurkowski, *Maciej Dogiel (1715—1760)*, Warsaw—Lida, 2006; K. Puchowski, "Edukacja elit w pijarskim Collegium Nobilium we Lwowie w świetle programu popisu uczniowskiego", in *Szkolnictwo pijarskie w czasach minionych a współczesne problemy edukacji historycznej*, ed. K. Wróbel

King Stanislaus II Augustus attributed Konarski's zeal to implement reforms in schools of his own order to his educational journeys. "Among the Piarists one man stood out owing to his virtues and desires to develop the nation's education, which it so much needs. Father Konarski first travelled to Italy and France, blushing there due to his shame and ignorance, but then, he made every effort to liberate his brethren and himself from ignorance. In France, he developed his literary tastes and gained some knowledge about literature, which were in vogue there between 1730 and 1740."¹³

The Monarch underscored the significance of Konarski's two works: *De emendandis eloquentiae vitiis* (Warsaw, 1741), intended to "combat language errors", and *O skutecznym rad sposobie, albo o utrzymaniu ordynaryjnych sejmów* (Warsaw, 1760—1763), in which the Piarist leader was "first to dare to fight the stupidity of *liberum veto* abuses"¹⁴. His assessment of the Piarist's linguistic and political concepts presented in the books was not high: "Both of them, if they were to be translated into foreign languages, would amount to nothing more than rambling about some sort of proper style and reason, but such was at that time wretched state of knowledge and political understanding in Poland. Allegiance to *liberum veto* was so strong that it had morphed into genuine fanaticism and it, indeed, took immense courage and civic virtues to dare to publish both of these works under your own name. It was for this reason that Stanislaus II Augustus in the first days of his reign ordered the casting of a medal bearing the image of Konarski and the words *Sapere auso*."¹⁵

The analysis of the origins and activity of the Piarist schools in the Commonwealth should take into account the influence of the culturally stimulating role of magnate courts, some of which were already perceived as "excellent schools of life and knightly trade"¹⁶ Stanislaus II Augustus held in high regard some magnate families, and at the same time, the positive activity of foreign *metr* teachers. "The Houses of the Czartoryskis or the Poniatowskis — and few others — where education and spiritual culture have been maintained thanks to teachers brought from other countries, were looking in horror at the ex-

-Lipowa, M. Ausz, 1, Kraków—Lublin, 2010, 97—110; K. Puchowski, "Pijarskie Collegium Nobilium w Wilnie. Korzenie i konteksty", *XVIII amžiaus studijos* 5, 2019, 107—142.

¹³ *Pamiętniki króla Stanisława Augusta*. Cf. *Pamiętniki króla Stanisława Augusta*, ed. D. Triaric, transl. W. Brzozowski, pref. A. Grześkowiak-Krwawicz, Warsaw, 2013, 410.

¹⁴ *Pamiętniki...*, 410—411.

¹⁵ *Pamiętniki...*, 411.

¹⁶ This was what Michał Starzeński wrote about his stay at the magnate court of Jan Klemens Branicki (*Na schyłku dni Rzeczypospolitej. Kartki z pamiętnika (1757—1795)*, ed. H. Mościcki, Warsaw—Kraków, 1914, 3).

tent of collapse to which the Jesuits and other Polish clerics brought national education.”¹⁷

It was no coincidence that Stanislaus II Augustus pointed to the inspiring role of secular elites in the reform of monastic schools including those run by the Piarists. In his memoirs, he wrote about his uncle, Michał Czartoryski, who “while possessing education that was better and higher than people usually had in our country”¹⁸, debated often and at length about the necessity to reform national education. He was the one who “to the greatest extent contributed with his criticism and advice to cause the Jesuits and the Piarists to get rid in their schools of the burden of linguistic barbarisms that reigned supreme there”¹⁹, and he is the one that deserves our gratitude to have been “first to defy the excessive barbarisation of the language to which the ignorance of Augustus II and the sloth of Augustus III had led literature in Poland”²⁰.

The need to implement the necessary reforms had matured in aristocratic mansions well before it did in monastic milieus, also in the field of education²¹. It is no accident that many teachers, especially in the colleges for nobles (Andrzej Antoszewicz, Jakub Lenarski, Maciej Dogiel, Kajetan Madaliński, Józef Osiański, Wojciech Reszczyński, Aleksander Turski), performed the function of private teachers and accompanied young aristocrats in their educational journeys to Western Europe, consequently receiving education themselves, learning modern languages and discovering the leading educational institutions²². As guardians of magnate sons, they made sure that the guidelines contained in parental instructions were fulfilled. The educational scope and pragmatism of those instructions usually exceeded the educational program of monastic schools, which confirmed and presented in a good light the erudition and pedagogical culture of the elites of the Crown and Lithuania²³.

It was not until the 18th century that the aristocracy had favoured private teachers, home- and court-based education complemented by academic journeys over organised Latin education. Like the Jesuits, the Piarists criticised those

¹⁷ *Pamiętniki...*, 409.

¹⁸ *Pamiętniki...*, 58.

¹⁹ *Pamiętniki...*, 58—59.

²⁰ *Pamiętniki...*, 59.

²¹ J. Staszewski, “Wiek XVIII w Polsce — próba nowej syntezy”, in *Między barokiem a oświeceniem. Nowe spojrzenie na czasy saskie*, ed. K. Stasiewicz, S. Achremczyk, Olsztyn, 1996, 10; A. Pośpiech, W. Tygielski, “Społeczna rola dworu magnackiego XVII—XVIII wieku”, *Przegląd Historyczny* 69, 1978, 215—237.

²² M. Ausz, K. Puchowski, *Komisja Edukacji Narodowej 1773—1794. Szkoły w Wydziale Pijarskim* (in print).

²³ See: *Przestrogi i nauki dla dzieci. Instrukcje rodzicielskie (XVIII w.)*, ed. M.E. Kowalczyk, D. Żołędź-Strzelczyk, Wrocław, 2017.

reforms, discreetly advocating an upbringing in a confined college within the walls and guardians protecting the youth against the externalities, temptations of adult life and even the conduct of their parents that was not always desirable. A son that was educated in a *convictus* (boarding school) was supposed to guarantee the reinforcement of his family's religiosity and morality and promulgate in society ways of behaviour that were compliant with the teachings of the Roman Catholic Church²⁴. That objective was equally important in the era of the Commission of National Education, not only for the Piarist Collegium Nobilium in Warsaw, but also for the boarding schools set up or reorganised by the Commission for poor nobles. Inasmuch as the potential of their teaching staff, financial standing and material base allowed it, they adopted a lot in terms of organisation and the syllabus from the elite schools.

A component which was important in the system of the Commission of National Education's schools, aside from the Piarist Collegium Nobilium, were *convictus* dormitories for sons of impoverished nobles, which have so far been marginalised in historiography. And that does not seem right, as they should be considered as one of the Commission's greatest achievements. The *convictus* superiors were to feed their disciples with "the most comprehensive gratitude to the king, the homeland and the Commission, and permanently evoke a zeal to study"²⁵. Both the organisational and financial effort, unprecedented in the history of education, and the care for an ambitious syllabus and decent studying conditions deserve special credit. The Commission's endeavours had changed the principle of the elite colleges for nobles, advocated also by Konarski — "the more you pay, the more you learn"²⁶. The boarding schools for poor noble youth, often entrusted to the Piarists, prepared the sons of impoverished nobles free of charge for the future teaching or military careers and educated them in the spirit of faithful service to the king. It was an important democratising element of the Commonwealth's education system. Because of that kind of educational facility, acquiring necessary professional knowledge did not have to be connected to the function a magnate student's servant²⁷.

The origins of the transformation of the educational model should also be credited to the reform-oriented monastic circles. Among the Piarists, there was no shortage of enlightened nobles and magnates who understood that the right upbringing and education constituted the basis for the state's development and

²⁴ K. Liebreich, "Piarist...", 67—68.

²⁵ "Rezolucja K.E.N. dotycząca konwiktów dla ubogiej szlachty", in *Ustawodawstwo szkolne za czasów Komisji Edukacji Narodowej. Rozporządzenia, ustawy pedagogiczne i organizacyjne (1773—1793)*, ed. J. Lewicki, Kraków, 1925, 204—205.

²⁶ S. Konarski, *Listy 1733—1771*, ed. J. Nowak-Dłużewski, Warsaw, 1962, 45.

²⁷ M. Ausz, K. Puchowski, *Komisja...*, 151—168.

would determine the success of the future reforms and shape the future national culture. A lot of teachers and students joined in the change movement initiated by the camp connected with King Stanislaus II Augustus Poniatowski, played a part in building the king's party and made a substantial contribution to the work of the Commission of National Education.

It should be borne in mind, though, that a monastic teacher who was connected with two institutions, his order and his school, subjected the existence of the latter to the objectives of his order — the goals of the Church. Setting up the colleges for nobles in the Commonwealth was an educational compromise that was necessary to maintain the influence on the elites.

Like the schools of the Jesuits and Theatines, the estate-exclusive Piarist schools, from the beginning firmly settled in Europe's pedagogical culture and pedagogical thought, joined in the effort to reform the Commonwealth. They did not do that by any forceful indoctrination, but by providing functional knowledge and skills with absolute conviction that it was education that drove societies out of barbarity towards civilisation. The awareness about the country's economic, scientific and civilisational underdevelopment motivated the best colleges to put in a strenuous effort to reduce the distance from Europe's leading countries. The challenge was formidable. It involved preparing syllabi, teachers and textbooks. Drawing up the new school law, Konarski had much more freedom in this respect than the Jesuits who were constrained by their *Ratio studiorum* (1599).

The aspirations of the most enlightened Piarists who ran the colleges for nobles with the intention to benefit the Commonwealth collided with the encyclopedic nature of the syllabus. There was no way the Collegia Nobilia could replace professional education offered by Western European knights' academies and engineering, marine or diplomatic schools. In the Piarists' elite colleges, the teaching of linguistic disciplines was prevalent because the Order's educational activity, like that of the Theatines and Jesuits, concentrated primarily on educating the prospective political elite. The orders' strategy was directed towards capturing power rather than transforming it, which is why Konarski, the Piarist leader, admonished the teachers to avoid sensitive political issues. Such a conservative attitude seriously undermined the honesty of the Piarists' intentions concerning professional education of the future governing estates. Admittedly, the Jesuits espoused similar opportunism²⁸.

In the light of the completed comparative research, it can be argued that the motivation to set up exclusive boarding schools was the same for all the Commonwealth monastic orders. Like in Western Europe, those institutions were reflective of the ruling estates' educational aspirations, and the orders were afforded an op-

²⁸ K. Puchowski, *Jezuickie...*, 515.

portunity to take command of educating those with whom lay the real power and influence. The idea commonly accepted in historical research that the Piarists and Jesuits attempted to use their colleges for nobles to inspire the future intellectual elite of the country with a new spirit is debatable. In order to rear faithful sons of the Church and retain their influence on the education of men with wealth and power, the orders would have rather attempted to reconcile their own conservatism with the aspirations of the enlightened magnates. It was rightly pointed out in the literature of the early 19th century that the order-run schools consolidated and conserved the community of the nobles. What their students left with was the approval of the existing social order and the sense it was inviolable²⁹.

The Piarist colleges prepared their students to pursue a practical administrative career, perform an official function or participate in the life of a magnate court. The Piarists clearly distinguished the purposes of their own institutions from those of cadet schools which had as early as in the 17th century acquired the form of specialised schools³⁰. They reiterated that the youth they educated in their schools were destined for public life, to serve in provincial and national parliaments and courts and to head county and provincial authorities. The Order did not rule out that in the future their students would fill the high military ranks, but they left the task of preparing candidates for military service to the cadet academies. In the elite colleges of the Crown and Lithuania, the Piarists taught military architecture, but unlike Western European schools, they were incapable of tying the theory to practice, which undoubtedly created a gap in modern education and fell short of the country's military needs. Therefore, the claims made in the historical research so far about noble colleges in the Commonwealth emulating the syllabi of cadet academies need to be seen with a considerable degree of criticism. The objective of cavalry exercises at monastic schools was for students to master skills that were particularly highly rated by the aristocracy. The Monarch's protectorate was one of the key factors that gradually modernised Warsaw's Collegium Nobilium of the Piarist Order, and its teaching staff usually endorsed the king's reforms. The king watched the elements of knightly education conducted by the Piarists with great care. That was the case during the 1790 and 1791 summer holidays. The Monarch watched the drills, marches, weapon wielding, cannon firing, fort storming and military manoeuvres carried out by Piarist students³¹.

²⁹ K. Puchowski, *Jezuickie...*, 514; A. Waśko, *Romantyczny sarmatyzm. Tradycja szlachecka w literaturze polskiej lat 1831—1863*, Kraków, 1995, 187.

³⁰ N. Conrads, *Ritterakademien der frühen Neuzeit. Bildung als Standesprivileg im 16. u. 17. Jh.*, Göttingen, 1982.

³¹ K. Kamiński, "Opis historyczny Konwikt Warszawskiego księży pijarów", ed. R. Mączyński, *Analecta. Studia i Materiały z Dziejów Nauki* 3, 1994, 99; R. Mączyński, "Żoliborski Konwikt Pijarów", *Analecta. Studia i Materiały z Dziejów Nauki* 3, 1994, 20—21.

College instructors devised the textbooks, calendars, maps and atlases and adapted Western European publications by introducing corrections and additions concerning the Crown and Lithuania. The circle of the most distinguished authors included Dominik Szybiński (1730—1799), a Piarist, who emphasised those ideas that might arouse the youth's particular bond with their homeland and shape their civic attitudes; he condemned the conduct of the partitioning countries towards the Commonwealth and undermined the historical grounds for their claims. He discerned and raised awareness of the need for reform and of the educational role of law. Szybiński is also regarded as the father of Polish calligraphy³².

The majority of teachers conducted no research on their own and adopted an eclectic approach towards spreading the findings of European scholars. It is worthy of note that the canon of required texts included the latest Western publications, including texts by Protestant authors, such as Gottfried Lengnich or Christoph Hartknoch. It needs, however, to be taken into account that changes in the syllabus had to correspond to the teaching of the Roman Catholic Church; therefore, the reception of pure sciences and modern era natural sciences were a much later process, especially in relation to the Protestant schools.

The Piarist professors sought to bring back to Europe a respectable image of their country. It was with their help that schools participated in the Enlightenment-driven reform of the state that was aimed at building a powerful and well-governed commonwealth. The youth of the elite schools were aware of the traditions they inherited and the burdens they bore on account of their origin. Their professors raised the awareness of a cultural bond with Europe and encouraged them to engage in peaceful competition in the field of science and culture. The modernising of rhetoric, defence of the native language, study of modern languages, history and geography, experimental physics and civil and military architecture, as well as the introduction of knightly skills undoubtedly constituted a positive change in the Catholic education system, which was useful in supporting the Enlightenment transformation of the country³³. This transformation was particularly vivid in the era of the Commission of National Education. The Commission continually emphasised the necessity to modernise the programme of education and carefully supervised that process in the schools run by the Piarist Order.

Thanks to the noble colleges, the knowledge of modern languages extended beyond the circles of the well-educated and travelling magnates. Lessons in

³² K. Puchowski, "Szybiński Gabriel", in *Polski słownik biograficzny*, ed. A. Romanowski, 49, Warsaw—Kraków, 2014, 516—518.

³³ K. Puchowski, "Kolegia szlacheckie teatynów, pijarów i jezuitów a reformy edukacyjne w Rzeczypospolitej Obojga Narodów doby oświecenia", *Nasza Przeszłość* 117, 2012, 301—313.

French, German and Italian made it easier to receive modern scientific concepts and explore the contemporary political and legal doctrines and, in a longer perspective, allowed for self-study, thus breaking down ideological or conceptual barriers that were typical of religious schools. In the era of the Commission of National Education, the study of modern languages assumed an important role in the other schools. The Commission's laws for the boarding schools for poor nobles set out the necessity of the study of German and French.

Rhetoric invariably remained the crown of school study. Noble colleges shaped the political culture of their students who were to be fine speakers, like Cicero, and masters of the art of conversation³⁴. Their conversational skills far exceeded the capacity of common people. Their flair and precision of communication, ability to easily articulate and present opinions, as well as argue to reasonably prove their point, effectively formulate their opinion, command the language register or possess an elegant and natural tone were all precious skills acquired at the schools of the time, including Jesuit schools. *Ars rhetorica* was indispensable in the process of attracting followers, reconciling the parties or reaching a compromise; it was necessary in the civic activity in *sejmik* parliaments, courts, tribunals, political campaigning, social life or in a military camp, as well as when proving the superiority of one's own faith.

According to the new guidelines, rhetoric was intended as an important component of civic education, and it was meant to instil in students the modern concepts of public matters. Although they avoided the most delicate political matters, the topics of rhetoric exercises concerned pressing and current affairs that were presented in the spirit of the epoch, thus transforming the image of the noble man. Young people were being taught to look critically at the realities of the nobility-led Commonwealth, and the issues raised in the newer textbooks included the correct understanding of freedoms and the effective functioning of the state apparatus. Most of those proposals were to be reflected in the Constitution of 3 May 1791. Graduates of the elite colleges, i.e. the schools that reinforced the pro-nobility nature of monastic education, caused the noble estate to self-confine itself, which was what that act prescribed. Therefore, it may be

³⁴ As early as such Italian humanists, such as Francesco Petrarca, Guarino da Verona, Vittorino da Feltre or Pier Paolo Vergerio, insisted that studies of the ancient heritage would shape a person's character and prepare them for public life. The Jesuits and, following in their footsteps, Piarists, accepted that model of education in the belief that it would effectively serve the shaping of the right character and piety. See: R. Bod, *A new history of the humanities: The search for principles and patterns from Antiquity to the present*, Oxford, 2013, 142—153; P.F. Grendler, "The culture of the Jesuit teacher 1548—1773", *Journal of Jesuit Studies* 3, 2016, 31—36; J.W. O'Malley, *Pierwsi jezuici*, transl. P. Samerek et al., Kraków, 1999, 321; K. Puchowski, "Antyk w edukacji elit Rzeczypospolitej epoki oświecenia", in *Antyk oświeconych. Studia i rozprawy o miejscu starożytności w kulturze polskiej XVIII wieku*, ed. T. Chachulski, Warsaw, 2012, 97—144.

inferred that the elite colleges, while being schools of political oratory, raised a generation of new citizens for whom the interests of the state represented the superior value; a generation that was capable of restraining the selfishness of its own noble estate. As a consequence, education in the era of the Commission of National Education assumed a more democratic character.

Noble youth prepared for social and political life by participating in school *sejmik* parliaments, public functions and, above all, on the school stage that accompanied ceremonies and public and state events. Theatre, music and dance had been an integral part of education from the moment noble colleges opened. The Order appreciated the solemn role of the theatre as one of the key factors of the making of the speaker that prepared the candidate for public speeches among other things, but also as an effective medium to promote desirable attitudes³⁵.

The educational offers of the Piarists, Theatines and Jesuits were very similar. Like in all other schools of that type across Europe, their colleges underscored patriotic and civic education without relinquishing the primacy of religious education. Striving for religious homogeneity of the Polish—Lithuanian Commonwealth was the objective of all the orders.

Taking into account research conducted so far, it seems unjustified to pit the orders against one another or to marginalise the role of the Theatines' college. While recognising the reform-oriented circles among the Piarists and Jesuits, it is worth observing that it was the Theatines, Italian friars, who were first to come across the new currents of thought and teaching, and they were first to introduce them to their schools in the Commonwealth. They were also in permanent contact with their native country. It needs to be emphasised that it was not until the 1750s that the full development of the Piarist school in Warsaw had occurred, i.e. the time when the Theatines' college and the Jesuits' schools were in their prime.

When the Commission of National Education was established, the Piarist schools, like other educational facilities of the religious orders, were put under its authority. The Piarists were obligated to comply with the government-imposed laws, and the schools they ran lost their distinctive characteristics. The syllabus reform carried out by the Commission of National Education in the Piarist-run schools reduced their scope of philology and rhetoric-oriented study for the sake of more functional and utilitarian concepts. There was a lesser emphasis on the linguistic subjects, and the scope of Latin was reduced; natural and physi-

³⁵ R. Mączyński, "Teatr pijarskiego konwiktu Collegium Nobilium", in idem, *Muzyka i teatr. W kręgu kultury zakonnej Warszawy XVII—XIX wieku*, Toruń, 2018, 89—184; J. Okoń, *Wychowanie do społeczeństwa w teatrach szkolnych jezuitów w Rzeczypospolitej Obojga Narodów*, Kraków, 2018.

cal sciences along with history, geography, as well as elements of agricultural and medical sciences were introduced in their place. "Moral science", based on natural law, was a completely new subject.

The decision to introduce the teaching of Polish, mathematical and natural disciplines, secular moral science, history with geography, law, modern languages, arts and crafts and knowledge about health had resulted in the necessity to edit proper textbooks and prepare properly educated teachers. In this historic reform, the Piarists played their considerable part, but they also had to take up many of the disciplines they had until then neglected in their colleges, such as legal education, architecture, military studies or agriculture.

It has to be borne in mind that until the times of the Commission, any changes the Piarists had proposed regarding education had to be approved by the Order's supervisors and could not expose the Order to a conflict with the Church authorities. On their part, the orders saw education only in relation to the piety they lived by and which they desired to instil in others. This impeded the development of science, and the distinguished scholars of the particular orders for a long time could not bring themselves to accept science's autonomy from the faith. The Commission of National Education had removed those barriers to a great extent.

In his memoirs, Stanislaus II Augustus described the Commission's ambitious plans panoramically: "The king also decided with his associates (which fortunately was fulfilled) that the academies in Kraków and Vilnius, the Piarist schools, finishing schools for nuns and secular finishing schools for young people of both genders, as well as all other institutions dealing with education would be brought under the Commission's authority. The Commission devised the syllabus for the entire country that contained religion, moral science, pure science, history and literature, public law, natural science, agriculture, ancient and modern languages — and all of this properly adapted for both genders. Textbooks for each subject were printed, most of them written anew, and often translated."³⁶

Stanislaus II Augustus confidently wrote that books published in the times of the Commission's operation "so much transformed the national spirit in an entire generation brought up according to its method that it completely departed from the ideas of *liberum veto*. And still, its fathers had been ready to sacrifice their lives in its defence"³⁷. He also discerned an important change in the attitude of his compatriots: "This new generation, immersed in a genuinely civic spirit, let itself be taxed for the purpose of the military and the state, while

³⁶ *Pamiętniki...*, 413.

³⁷ *Pamiętniki...*, 413.

also making other sacrifices, whereas the previous generations would have only stood in defiance.”³⁸

The Monarch arguably also meant the Piarists. Three Piarists made a great contribution to the activities of the KEN body — the Society for Elementary Books: Antoni Popławski, Kazimierz Narbutt (from 1775) and Onufry Kopczyński (from 1780), who effectively cooperated with their former competitors, the ex-Jesuits. Of the 30 elementary books approved and published by the Commission of National Education, 14 were written by the Piarists, e.g. Antoni Popławski, Onufry Kopczyński, Kajetan Józef Skrzetuski, Wincenty Skrzetuski and Ignacy Zaborowski. The Piarists were also co-authors of other textbooks and authors of many books that the Commission of National Education did not order but which were often used by teachers in sub-department and department schools. The Piarists also translated books which to a greater or lesser extent were used in curricular and extracurricular work. What was notable was that, by the Commission’s recommendations, Piarist colleges began, more distinctly than ever, radiating Enlightenment ideas. The greater stress on the teaching of mathematical and natural sciences and the promotion of experiments in pure science were reflective of that transformation.

The Piarists worked also as professors at the Main Schools: in Kraków, Rafał Józef Czerwiakowski — professor of medicine, Antoni Popławski — professor of law; in Vilnius, at the Main School of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, Józef Konstanty Bogusławski — professor of theology and history of the Church, Hieronim Stroynowski and Michał Olechnowicz — professors of law, Bernard Syruć — professor of the Holy Scripture, Filip Nereusz Golański — professor of Latin and Polish literature.

When discussing the relations between the Piarists and the Commission of National Education, we may cite the opinion of Stanisław Tync: “we cannot call them either friendly or frigid — they were fairly good. There were never any major or distinct conflicts; therefore, we may talk of some sort of cooperation of both parties, of a ‘certain submissiveness to the Commission’s wishes’”³⁹. This “submissiveness” was not always well perceived by the Church authorities. In 1783, the apostolic nuncio to the Commonwealth, Giovanni Andrea Archetti, meaningfully said that the Piarists “cared more for the enforcement of the Education Commission’s orders than the interest of the Church”⁴⁰.

Another difficult issue the Piarists faced was the prestigious and profitable private education system that was not under the Commission of National Education’s authority. Some Piarists would often at their own discretion and with-

³⁸ *Pamiętniki...*, 413.

³⁹ A. Popławski, *Pisma pedagogiczne*, pref. S. Tync, Wrocław—Warsaw—Kraków, 1957, XCVIII.

⁴⁰ A. Popławski, *Pisma...*, XCVIII.

out their supervisors' permission leave the Order and teach at noble mansions or private schools. It is hard to determine unambiguously today what induced those Piarists to do so. The reasons were certainly complex, e.g. they were unable to teach the new subjects or unwilling to comply with the Order's principles, or they sought a material gain. The latter two were probably the key reasons for the friars to leave the Order. Most of those people would ignore the calls of the Order's authorities to give up private teaching and return to the Order.

When the Commission of National Education was founded, several months after Priest Stanisław Konarski's death, the Piarist Order was perceived and evaluated mainly through the prism of the great reformer's achievements. The role of Konarski and his associates' reform in Polish education is huge, but there is a lack of a new perspective on this issue. The Piarists were not a lonely island, as the latest research demonstrates. Also the Jesuits and Theatines made a considerable contribution to the development of Polish education. Reforming their schools and founding noble boarding schools, i.e. Collegia Nobilia, the Piarists followed the main path of the Enlightenment transformation, taking advantage, though selectively, of Western European ideas and modern pedagogical solutions. A number of the most distinguished friars embarked on educational journeys, which allowed them to come into contact with modern scientific thought at Western European universities. The Piarist reform was undoubtedly deeply rooted in Western European pedagogical thought.

The perception of the Piarists as reformers of Polish education was also a certain liability in the times of the Commission of National Education. Although the Order had entered the structure of the new ministry as a matter of course, thus repairing its own difficult material condition (remuneration for schools and *convictus* staff), the functioning within the Order caused problems. Appreciating their own religious mission, identity, considerable independence from the state's governing bodies, their educational record, pedagogical heritage and their position as the reformer of education, the Order's authorities sought to attain the greatest possible autonomy within the Commission's structures. The Piarists' cooperation with the Commission can be divided into three sub-periods:

1. The years 1773—1780 were the time the Piarists' position in the KEN's structures was being formed.
2. The years 1780—1790 involved efforts to create their own department.
3. The last period included the establishment of the department for the Polish and Lithuanian parts in 1790 and its several years of operation.

There is no doubt that the creation of the department was the Order's greatest success, as none of their rivals achieved such autonomy. Unfortunately, most of the source materials from the period have been lost; therefore, it is hard to evaluate its functioning.

When analysing the attitude of the Piarist Order towards the endeavours of the Commission of National Education, one must also take into account the Order's constitution. The solutions proposed by the KEN had considerably weakened the position of the provincial superior and his control over the Order and disrupted the system of promotions. It was a teaching order, and its charism was determined by its fourth pledge — free teaching of children. The entire structure of the Order, with the said procedure sanctioned by tradition and internal regulations, was tied to educational work. This explains the Order's struggle to secure their own department. Of course, its ambition and strong will to retain some degree of independence and identity did play a certain role.

In the light of the completed analyses, we can say that the Order in principle fulfilled the challenges of the KEN reforms, and the number of people deserving credit for their contribution, working in the KEN structures and writing textbooks, was considerable. In its undertakings, the Commission appreciated the sympathetic attitude of the Order's authorities as evidenced by its reports. The report on the Piarist Department visitation of 1788 says that because of his excellent staffing policy, care to select only the best teachers and raise the level of teaching in the schools of his department, as well as his ardency to comply with the Commission's laws, Walerian Wąsowski, the provincial superior and the department rector of Piarist schools, deserves special acknowledgement by the Commission⁴¹.

Visitation reports clearly show that most of the students were noble children, with children of the poor nobility prevailing, who were less enthusiastic about the new KEN solutions. As visitation reports demonstrate, rich nobles accepted new reforms without major reservations. The KEN reform gave little benefit to the other estates. The Piarists had attempted to reform and expand education to include the other estates prior to the establishment of the KEN, e.g. *Gymnasium Artificium* in Opole Lubelskie⁴² or *Collegium Civitas*, a *convictus* educational facility for rich burghers in Warsaw⁴³. All those attempts were short-lived. While remembering the KEN's achievements, it was mainly

⁴¹ M. Ausz, K. Puchowski, *Komisja...*, 163.

⁴² Created on the initiative of Stanisław Konarski in 1761, *Gymnasium Artificium* was one of the first vocational schools in Europe and the first such school in the Commonwealth. Stanisław Konarski's brother, Ignacy Konarski, was appointed rector of this school. The young people attending *Gymnasium Artificium*, while coming from the neighbouring villages and towns, received education free of charge in such professions as weaver, shoemaker, blacksmith, tanner, saddler and wickerworker. The school operated for about 30 years. See: M. Ausz, "Szkoła rzemieślniczo-niedzielną w Opolu Lubelskim w latach 1835—1870", *Teka Komisji Historycznej Oddziału Lubelskiego PAN* 11, 2005, 73—97.

⁴³ M. Kinowska, "Osiemnastowieczne...", 426—429.

the noble youth that took advantage of its reforms, though the Piarists, inasmuch as they could, also cared for elementary schools. They also had their own ideas for developing education, such as those presented by Adolf Kamiński and Cyprian Wojciech Siostrzewitowski.

Admittedly, the Commission of National Education, having inspected the schools and the teaching staff, lost all its illusions regarding the possibility of creating an education system and implementing the educational reform to the extent that its Commissioners had ambitiously projected in 1773 and 1774. While the Piarists had actively engaged in the reforms, they strenuously sought to retain their distinct identity. They were members of a supranational Church, and they had to reconcile their obligations as teachers with those of members of the Order. In addition, preparing for the pedagogical mission was in most cases synonymous with religious formation and the interpretation of sciences compliant with the opinion of Rome. In the KEN era, although they were no longer the avant-garde of education reform, as in Konarski's times, the Piarists undoubtedly played an important role in its implementation. Although sometimes selectively, they drew from the latest educational concepts and currents, and the most enlightened among the Piarists played an essential role in the modification of the education system. It is worthy of note, however, that the Commission's endeavours had an undoubtedly refreshing impact on the modification and Europeanisation of the Calasanz Order's schools. Those institutions had abandoned to a great extent the traditional teaching dominated by scholastic philosophy and subjugated to the *Pietas*⁴⁴. It was thanks to the Commission that Piarist schools had become a more important element of the European civilisation.

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⁴⁴ K. Puchowski, "Pietas w kolegiach szlacheckich Rzeczypospolitej Obojga Narodów doby oświecenia", in *Wiek XVIII — między tradycją a oświeceniową współczesnością. Hermeneutyka wartości religijnych*, ed. B. Kuczera-Chachulska, T. Chachulski, Warsaw, 2017, 156—192.

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