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**COMPARATIVE EDUCATION
OF WIKTOR RABCZUK (1931–2020):
FROM THE STUDY OF EDUCATION IN AFRICAN
COUNTRIES TO EUROPEAN EDUCATION**

Abstract

Wiktor Rabczuk was a well-known and respected researcher in Polish comparative education. A specialist in comparative research in the field of educational systems of African countries and Western European countries and a promoter of the “European dimension in education” in Polish schools, Rabczuk emerged from the field of comparative education, which was initially established by Bogdan Nawroczyński. Nawroczyński’s contributions in this field were subsequently continued by his student, Anna Mońka-Stanikowa. It was under her supervision that Rabczuk wrote and defended his doctoral thesis in comparative education. Like Mońka-Stanikowa, Rabczuk researched education in Western European countries, becoming an expert on private education and the educational policy of the European Union. This article aims to introduce Professor Wiktor Rabczuk and present his contribution to the development of Polish comparative education, especially during the period of Poland’s accession to the European Union. Although Rabczuk’s publications, which depict the challenges of education in European countries, remain essential for readers interested in these issues under analysis, no comprehensive

study has been conducted on his achievements and scientific profile (apart from short biographies in the dictionaries of educators). The first part of this article presents an overview of Rabczuk's biography, which is crucial to understanding the development of his research interests. The next part of the article presents Rabczuk's achievements in the field of comparative education. A combination of content analysis of Rabczuk's publications and an assessment of archival records have been presented in this article. The collected research material presents Rabczuk as the leading educational comparatist in Poland during the late 20th and early 21st centuries.

Key words: comparative education, education research, African countries, European education, European dimension in education

Introduction

Many eminent scholars who have made significant contributions to their discipline have also established schools of thought and left a lasting impact through influential alumni. The creator of the first school of comparative education, which was established in Poland in the 1960s, was an outstanding educator named Bogdan Nawroczyński (1882–1974). Following his return to academia at the University of Warsaw in 1957, he focused almost exclusively on developing research in the field of educational comparativism. During this period, he published a significant monograph about comparative education, entitled *On French Education (O szkolnictwie francuskim)*,¹ along with numerous articles and reviews on the subject. Nawroczyński played a pivotal role in promoting the first doctorates in comparative education in Poland. His student Anna Mońka-Stanikowa (1917–2007) was the first recipient of a doctoral degree in this field, followed by Tadeusz J. Wiloch (1927–1995). Mońka-Stanikowa continued Nawroczyński's work at the University of Warsaw and became the first Polish specialist in the education system of Western European countries. Under her guidance,

¹ See B. Nawroczyński, *O szkolnictwie francuskim*, Warszawa 1961.

Wiktor Rabczuk became more proficient in research, culminating in his cooperation with the defence of his doctoral thesis.

In the case of Nawroczyński and his school of thought, we relate to not only the continuation of the master's work but also the further development of research in this area. Furthermore, publications by Mońka-Stanikowa and Rabczuk show a similar methodological approach to educational research as presented by Nawroczyński, as well as a comparable understanding of the importance of the research conducted for the reform and development of the Polish education system. Rabczuk, with his achievements in comparative education, should be included in Nawroczyński's comparative education school of thought. Not only is Rabczuk linked to his master through his supervisor Mońka-Stanikowa, but together, they also form a community of scholars bound by similar research approaches and scientific interests. Nawroczyński's school of comparative education has left a lasting mark in the history of Polish educational comparativism.

Wiktor Rabczuk's path to a scientific career

Wiktor Rabczuk was born on 11 January 1931 in Brest-on-the-Bug. During the Warsaw Uprising, he was deported from Warsaw to the labour camp in Schwarzenberg, Saxony. Following the war, he graduated from high school in 1949 before studying for his first degree at the Faculty of Philology at the University of Wrocław and graduating in 1952. He continued his studies in classical philology at the Faculty of Philology of the University of Warsaw. In 1954, he defended his MA thesis, entitled *Quid Cicero de Gracchiscensuerit*.² He was supervised by Kazimierz Feliks Kumaniecki (1905–1977), an eminent classical philologist, translator and literary scholar.

Immediately after his studies, Rabczuk commenced his career as a teacher. He initially gained experience as a language teacher in higher education, followed by teaching in primary and secondary schools.

² Archive of Pedagogical University of The Commission of National Education (KEN) in Cracow [AUP], Employee personal file – Wiktor Rabczuk, *Curriculum Vitae* – ref. 1031/44.

According to his curriculum vitae, from 1954 to 1957, he was a lecturer in Latin and Russian at the Warsaw University of Life Sciences. From 1957 to 1965, he worked as a teacher of Russian and Latin in several schools, including Primary School and Comprehensive School in Brwinów (1957–1958 and 1960–1962), the State Teacher Training College for Female Kindergarten Teachers in Oborniki Śląskie (1958–1960) and the Correspondence Comprehensive School No. 3 in Warsaw (1963–1965). With the acquired teaching experience, he left the country for the Republic of Zaire,³ where he continued his work as a Latin teacher at the College of Pope John XXIII in Kolwezi and the Athenaeum in Lubumbashi. Rabczuk worked in Africa from 1966 to 1974 and researched while teaching.⁴ During this time, he published a treatise entitled *Note sur l'enseignement dans l'ancien Royaume du Congo* in the publication “Likundoli – Enquzte d’Histoire Zairoise”. The subject of the analyses undertaken included the activities of the first European educational institutions established during the period of early Portuguese colonial expansion in West Africa.⁵

Rabczuk returned to Poland in 1974 and continued his teaching career. For a year, he worked as a Latin language teacher at the Foreign Language College of the University of Warsaw. Due to his proficiency in French, Rabczuk was able to secure a teaching position at the Lifelong Learning Education Centre No. 1 in Warsaw, where he taught the French language from 1975 to 1978. In 1978, he was hired at the Department of Non-European Countries of the Polish Academy of Sciences and gained his first experience as a research worker.⁶ During this

³ Republic of Zaire – the name of the Democratic Republic of the Congo from 1971 to 1997, after gaining independence. Until 1960, it was known as Belgian Congo.

⁴ [AUP], ref. 1031/44.

⁵ Information about the publication titled *Note sur l'enseignement dans l'ancien Royaume du Congo*, “Likundoli – Enquzte d’Histoire Zairoise”, 1974 no. 2 is included in the curriculum vitae of Wiktor Rabczuk, which he submitted when he was employed as an academic teacher at the Academy of Education of KEN in Cracow [AUP, ref. 1031/44]. This publication is difficult to access, being listed only in the Stanford University Library.

⁶ [AUP], ref. 1031/44.

time, he came into contact with Mońka-Stanikowa, who was in charge of the doctoral program at the University of Warsaw while also serving as the deputy director of the Institute of Pedagogy at the university.⁷ Under her academic guidance, Rabczuk wrote his doctoral thesis in comparative education, titled *Szkolnictwo w byłym Kongu Belgijskim* (*Schooling in the former Belgian Congo*), which he defended in 1979. After receiving his doctorate, he continued to work at the Polish Academy of Sciences as an assistant professor until 1980.⁸ During this period, he utilised his extensive experience accumulated over eight years in Africa, which allowed him to develop expertise in the field of education in African countries.

In the 1980s, he revisited Africa and secured a job in Algeria as a lecturer in general education and general didactics at the University of Technology and the Polytechnic Pedagogical College of Oran. He worked in the country from 1980 to 1986⁹ and enriched his academic output with a monograph and several articles on the issues of education in African countries.¹⁰ At the time, Rabczuk was the only educational comparativist to bring to light the complex issues of education in African countries, as well as the question of the implementation of European educational solutions to the Polish reader.

After returning to Poland, Rabczuk began working at the Educational Research Institute (ERI) in Warsaw from 1987 to 1992. He initially joined the institute as an assistant professor and later became an associate professor. He was then promoted to the position of head of the publishing department. During this time, he published a monograph titled *Szkolnictwo wyższe w Algierskiej Republice Ludowo-Demokratycznej*

⁷ J. Kamińska, *Pamięci zmarłych profesorów Wydziału Pedagogicznego Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego – przedstawiciele pedagogiki społecznej, andragogiki, pedagogiki specjalnej, edukacji początkowej, pedagogiki porównawczej, animacji społeczno-kulturalnej*, "Kwartalnik Pedagogiczny", 2014 no. 4(234), p. 26.

⁸ [AUP], ref. 1031/44.

⁹ Ibidem.

¹⁰ See: W. Rabczuk, *Oświata w Afryce Czarnej. Z badań nad oświatą kolonialną w Kongu Belgijskim*, Wrocław–Warszawa–Kraków–Gdańsk–Łódź 1981; W. Rabczuk, *Belgijska polityka oświatowa w Kongu Belgijskim w latach 1945–1960*, "Rozprawy z Dziejów Oświaty", 1980 vol. 23, no. 80, pp. 177–203.

(*Higher Education in the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria*).¹¹ In this work, he drew on the experience he had gained during his time in Africa. Besides delivering lectures, Rabczuk also engaged in research that encompassed both archival investigations and fieldwork, familiarising himself with the activities of various educational institutions.

It should be emphasised that during the communist period, it was particularly difficult for researchers to investigate issues of education in Western countries. With his extensive experience in research and teaching practice, Rabczuk achieved his habilitation after the political system underwent a transformation.¹² While working at the ERI, Rabczuk directed his research interests towards the educational issues of Western European countries. He was particularly interested in the organisation of private education in these countries as well as the impact of progressive European integration on the education of the member states. The research resulted in three further monographs and numerous articles in academic journals, published mainly in "Nowa Szkoła" and "Edukacja i Dialog".¹³

From 1994 to 1995, Rabczuk worked as a lecturer in comparative education at the Higher School of Education in Kielce, which is now known as Jan Kochanowski University of Kielce). In 1995, he obtained his habilitation in education with a specialisation in comparative education at the Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań. The basis for the assessment of the habilitation candidate was a monograph titled *Poli-*

¹¹ See W. Rabczuk, *Szkolnictwo wyższe w Algierskiej Republice Ludowo-Demokratycznej*, Warszawa–Łódź 1989.

¹² B. Śliwerski, *Odszedł komparatysta Profesor Wiktor Rabczuk*, Blog – Pedagog, 22/01/2020, <https://sliwerski-pedagog.blogspot.com/2020/01/odszed-komparatysta-profesor-wiktor.html> (accessed: 15/03/2023).

¹³ See: W. Rabczuk, *Szkolnictwo prywatne w wybranych krajach Europy Zachodniej*, Warszawa 1990; W. Rabczuk, *Szkolnictwo prywatne w Europie Zachodniej i w Polsce*, Warszawa 1992; W. Rabczuk, *Co warto wiedzieć o Wspólnocie Europejskiej*, Łomianki 1993; W. Rabczuk, *Szkolnictwo prywatne we Francji*, "Nowa Szkoła", 1990 no. 7, pp. 363–369; W. Rabczuk, *Szkolnictwo prywatne we Włoszech*, "Nowa Szkoła", 1991 no. 6, pp. 344–349; W. Rabczuk, *Szkolnictwo prywatne w krajach skandynawskich*, "Nowa Szkoła", 1992 no. 3, pp. 167–170; W. Rabczuk, *Edukacyjne problemy Japonii*, "Edukacja i Dialog", 1993 no. 3, pp. 47–50.

tyka edukacyjna Unii Europejskiej na tle przemian w szkolnictwie krajów członkowskich (*The educational policy of the European Union against the background of changes in the education of member states*).¹⁴ In the second half of the 1990s, Rabczuk began teaching at the Department of Education of the Higher School of Education of the Commission of National Education in Krakow (currently, Pedagogical University of Krakow) as an associate professor, where he worked until 2001. From 1999 to 2007, he worked at the Higher School of Education of the Common Knowledge Society in Warsaw while simultaneously serving as the Dean of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences in Olsztyn (2002–2005). In 2006, Rabczuk received his professorial appointment. Following his retirement, he continued to teach at the Pedagogium – Higher School of Rehabilitation Education in Warsaw (currently, Pedagogium Higher School of Social Sciences in Warsaw) and the ERI.¹⁵

In 1991, Rabczuk became a member of the Polish Comparative Education Society. Moreover, he served as the chairman of the Polish Association of Educational Promotions. As an experienced researcher and professor of pedagogy, he cooperated with the Ministry of Education in preparing reports and various expert opinions on private education in Poland and other European countries, as well as the development of the matriculation examination system. With his initiative, several community schools in Warsaw were founded, and Inter-school European Clubs were established within their scope. Rabczuk received numerous awards in recognition of his significant contribution to Polish science.¹⁶ He promoted the European dimension in education and acquired the opportunity to deliver guest lectures at French universities as part of the Erasmus programme. Throughout his career, Rabczuk successfully supervised four doctoral candidates in obtaining their PhD degrees. Furthermore, he actively participated as a reviewer for several doctoral and postdoctoral dissertations. Professor Rabczuk died on 19 January 2020 in Łomianki.

¹⁴ W. Rabczuk, *Polityka edukacyjna Unii Europejskiej na tle przemian w szkolnictwie krajów członkowskich*, Warszawa 1994.

¹⁵ [AUP], ref. 1031/44.

¹⁶ *Ibidem*.

Research on education systems in African countries

During the 1970s and 1980s, the exploration of education in African countries was rare, not only in Poland but also among European comparativists. It should be emphasised that Rabczuk's competencies were best placed to research Belgian colonial educational policy, as he was aware of how Zaire's schools operate from his experience. He consulted with Bogumil Jewsiewicki, a well-known Africanist and a history professor, on the selection of source materials and the conception of his first monograph.¹⁷ Rabczuk's work on African education is a thorough, meticulous educational-historical study, revealing the complexity of educational development in former African colonies. This research integrity is particularly evident in the structure of his monographs and dissertations. In the methodological sense, Rabczuk's work was very well developed, with the author presenting in detail the purpose of the research undertaken and the research problem as well as describing the source materials used to develop the scientific text. In each of his works, Rabczuk used a variety of source materials, archives and materials that were often unpublished and difficult to access, the analysis of which allowed him to demonstrate the multifaceted issues of education in these countries. These works can be successfully categorised as being related to not only comparative education but also the sociology of education and the history of education, as he also repeatedly depicted the historical and social aspects of the changes that occurred in the education sector of former African colonies.

Undoubtedly, Rabczuk's prolonged stays in African countries played an imperative role in the development of his career. When he left for the Republic of Zaire for the first time, he already had more than 20 years of experience as a teacher in Poland. During this time, he also mastered his research skills, which resulted in interesting scientific publications. His second stay in Algeria was focused on his work as a university teacher, as Rabczuk had already acquired a doctorate in education with a specialisation in comparative education. After six years of work-

¹⁷ W. Rabczuk, *Oświata w Afryce*, op. cit., p. 7.

ing in Algeria, he published another monograph and several articles on education in African countries, wherein he addressed the development of education in Zaire, higher education in Algeria and the current educational issues faced by these countries.

Rabczuk's two extended stays in African countries not only developed his interest in education within that region but also provided him with an opportunity to thoroughly investigate the problem of the implementation and development of European-type education within an African context. In this respect, Rabczuk stood out among Polish educational comparatists of the period, especially because he published not only in Polish but also French and English. Rabczuk's first scholarly publication in French is a dissertation on the nature of educational-historical research on the problem of the first European educational institutions from the period of early colonial expansion in West Africa.¹⁸ In most of his other works, the author mainly used materials and publications in French and English for his analysis, holding UNESCO studies and reports in high regard. Wishing to avoid the censorship in force during the communist era, which could even halt the publishing process, he included "desirable works" by Marx, Engels and Lenin in the references, but did not refer to them directly in the text of the monograph. This was a fairly typical practice of Polish educational comparatists, whose political views did not coincide with that of the communist government camp.

Rabczuk's knowledge of education in African countries enabled him to prepare his doctoral thesis, wherein he presented the evolution of education in the Belgian Congo from the era of Belgian colonisation to Congolese independence. This work was a piece of comparative analysis, where education in the Congo was presented against the background of the policies of other colonial powers in Africa. When it came to comparing education in the Congo to Belgian education, Rabczuk could undoubtedly rely on the support of his supervisor Mońka-Stanikowa, an expert on this educational system at the time who had published a monograph titled *Szkolnictwo w Belgii współczesnej* (*Schooling in contempo-*

¹⁸ W. Rabczuk, *Note sur l'enseignement dans l'ancien Royaume du Congo*, "Liekundoli – Enquête d'Histoire Zairoise", 1974 no. 2.

rary Belgium).¹⁹ In his research, Rabczuk employed available archives, including government documents on the organisation of education in the Congo, as well as the correspondence of the colonial administration and school records (unpublished materials from meetings of the provincial councils and the Government Council of the Belgian Congo along with printed materials). He also applied statistical data from UNESCO studies for his analysis.²⁰ The author's personal experiences and observations from teaching in schools in the Republic of Zaire were also valuable. In a monograph published in 1981, titled *Oświata w Afryce Czarnej. Z badań nad oświatą kolonialną w Kongu Belgijskim (Education in Black Africa. From a study of colonial education in the Belgian Congo)*, Rabczuk presented a broader perspective of Belgian education. The undoubted merit of this work is the historical analysis of the development of education in this African country. The author introduced Polish readers to hitherto completely unknown issues of education in former African colonies. In this respect, his publications were of considerable interest, not only among Polish but also European educators.

Noteworthy is Rabczuk's publication in "Rozprawy z Dziejów Oświaty" (*Dissertations in the History of Education*) in 1980, exhibiting the turning points in the development of education policy in the Belgian Congo following the Second World War. Outlining the developments in educational policy, he drew attention to early 20th-century events, such as the signing of the Concordat in 1906 between the Congo Free State and the Vatican. This document served as the foundation for the colonial government's agreement to provide land free of charge and in perpetuity to Catholic missions. In return, the missions pledged to undertake the crucial task of educating the indigenous population. Knowing the scope of Catholic missionary schools in the Congo, Rabczuk emphasised that the signing of the concordat had initiated a dynamic development of elementary education in the country, patterned on the European model. Later in the dissertation, the author cited further important events related to the Belgian takeover, which were of great significance for the organisation of education. He pointed out that the colonisers were keen

¹⁹ See A. Mońka-Stanikowa, *Szkolnictwo w Belgii współczesnej*, Warszawa 1963.

²⁰ W. Rabczuk, *Oświata w Afryce*, op. cit., p. 7.

to maintain their existing influence in African countries and thus saw education as an opportunity to maintain order in that part of the world. Fearing the growing popularity of various ideologies in the first half of the 20th century, including communist theories, the Belgian authorities handed over the organisation of education in the Congo to ecclesiastical institutions, particularly, the Catholic Belgian Missions. To this end, the government transferred school colonies operated by these missions, and subsequently, a limited number of state vocational schools as well. The next step was to make colonial education denominational through the allocation of subsidies. The effect of such an educational policy in the Belgian Congo was to achieve an enrolment rate at the elementary school level in the interwar period. However, Rabczuk specified that the Belgians ultimately sought to isolate the indigenous communities.²¹

The actual development of education in the former African colonies occurred when the United Nations started to raise awareness about the actual conditions in these countries, which undoubtedly contributed to the dismantling of colonialism. As Rabczuk reported, in the Belgian Congo, it was only in the post-war years that the mission's educational monopoly began to be curtailed, granting subsidies to Protestants as well as establishing the first state secular schools for Europeans living in the colony. However, colonial government policies supported by the Catholic Church led to racial discrimination in education, as Western culture was imposed on the indigenous population, and the possibility of teaching national languages was restricted, thus reducing the chances of educating a secular intelligentsia from among the indigenous population.²² Rabczuk also stated that competition between Catholic- and Protestant-run missions significantly contributed to the relatively high enrolment rates in the Belgian Congo, which set the country apart from other African colonies. Both Catholics and Protestants strived to raise the level of education and educate as many people as possible to legitimise their *raison d'être* while simultaneously stressing the superiority of their educational campaign.²³

²¹ W. Rabczuk, *Belgijska polityka*, op. cit., pp. 178–180.

²² *Ibidem*, pp. 182–183.

²³ W. Rabczuk, *Oświata w Afryce*, op. cit., p. 55.

According to Rabczuk, the turning points in the development of education in the Belgian Congo were the establishment of UNESCO in 1946 and the adoption of the UN Declaration of Human Rights by the UN General Assembly in 1948. These events significantly contributed to international pressure on Belgium to communicate political, economic, social and educational development in line with the UN Charter. Another significant circumstance was the admission of Asians and Afro-Europeans to European schools in the colony, which took place in 1948. However, Rabczuk stated that racial discrimination remained a significant social issue until the actual dismantling of colonialism.²⁴ All these events and their consequences, both political and social, are described in detail by the author in his monograph titled *Oświata w Afryce Czarnej (Education in Black Africa)*.

As a researcher, Rabczuk remained objective in his assessments, especially concerning the repositioning of the role of the Catholic Church in the development of education in the Belgian Congo. He pointed out both the positive actions of Catholic missions and the consequences of some Vatican decisions, such as the rivalry with Protestant missions. Imperatively, in his analyses, Rabczuk indicated that the Belgians were courting racial purity in the Belgian Congo, which resulted in a dualistic education system, i.e. the operation of separate schools for European children and separate schools for indigenous children. It was not until the 1950s that indigenous people were allowed into European schools. Analysing the Belgian government's policy in the African colony, Rabczuk contrasted its assumptions with the colonial policy pursued by the French and English governments at the time. He reported that it was the Belgians who were particularly hard-hearted in their attitudes towards the indigenous Congolese population, wanting to maintain racial segregation at all costs. Meanwhile, the French and English were already opening their schools to hundreds of Africans.²⁵

Outlining the results of the colonial policy pursued in terms of education in the Congo, Rabczuk emphasised that a major factor in this development was the extent of the colony's economic progress. The

²⁴ Ibidem, pp. 91–92, 104.

²⁵ W. Rabczuk, *Belgijska polityka*, op. cit., pp. 191–192.

Congo was more industrialised than French West and Equatorial Africa and acted as a raw resource base for Belgium and the rest of the capitalist countries. In addition, the attrition of the secular and denominational streams also contributed to the development of the country's school network. Furthermore, Protestants played a key role by establishing schools, mainly at the elementary education level. In other African colonies, the role of Protestant missions was marginal. Rabczuk's conclusion, summarising the educational policy of the Belgian colony, is highly critical. After the dismantling of their colonies in Africa, the 80-year rule of Belgians left behind a huge backwardness in the organisation of education in the Congo, requiring sweeping reforms.²⁶

Rabczuk's method of analysing the problems of education in former African colonies is in line with the concept of comparative research given by Nawroczyński, who practised comparative education in close connection with the history of education. Rabczuk outlined the main trends of educational change in African countries, returning to the early days of colonialism and presenting the effects of specific occurrences, reforms or political decisions that influenced the development of education in such countries. He skilfully referred to the assumptions of the educational policies of colonial countries and depicted the strong European influence in the organisation of education in African colonies. His publications were decidedly utilitarian, informing educational authorities, teachers and educators in Poland and Europe about how education was organised in African countries. Rabczuk's conclusions were highly critical, and the judgements contained reliable reasoning, based on sound scientific research.

In all his publications on the subject, Rabczuk used the contextual method to outline the relevant conditions of the educational phenomena analysed in historical, functional and axiological terms. He also utilised the historical-descriptive method, skilfully presenting information gathered from state archives and reports prepared by international organisations. Rabczuk's scholarly works from this period include comprehensive studies of issues that, although significant, are meagrely

²⁶ W. Rabczuk, *Oświata w Afryce*, op. cit., pp. 153–153.

known and not popular in European comparative education. They not only provide reliable information on the development of education on the African continent but also significantly influence the development of research in the area of global educational comparativism.

European dimension in education

After his research focus on African education, Rabczuk's second area of interest revolved around issues pertaining to European education in its broadest sense. He began his research into European education systems by analysing and comparing private education in Western European countries and Poland. However, his interest lay in the European Union's education policy in the context of the educational changes that took place in the European Community's member states at the time. Political and social changes at the beginning of the 21st century led him to undertake further research into the problem of the education of immigrants and national and ethnic minorities in European education systems, along with the related educational activities of EU institutions.

Rabczuk notably translated two well-known reports into Polish, which were originally written by Jacques Delors and Federico Mayor. The first one was titled *Learning: The treasure within; Report to UNESCO of the International Commission on Education for the Twenty-first Century* by Jacques Delors.²⁷ The second report, *The World Ahead: Our Future in the Making* by Federico Mayor, produced in collaboration with Jérôme Bindé and Jean-Yves Le Saux, was translated by Rabczuk together with Jerzy Wolf and Andrzej Janik.²⁸ However, the translation of Delors' report was significant as it depicted that lifelong learning is based on four pillars: *learning to live together, learning to know, learning to act* and *learning to be*. The translation of this report was imperative for the development of Polish education. The report drew attention

²⁷ *Edukacja – jest w niej ukryty skarb: raport dla UNESCO Międzynarodowej Komisji do spraw Edukacji dla XXI wieku pod przewodn. Jacques Delors*, ed. I. Al. Mufti, translated by W. Rabczuk, Warszawa 1998.

²⁸ *Przyszłość świata*, F. Mayor, in cooperation with J. Bindé, J.-Y. Le Saux, translated by J. Wolf, A. Janik, W. Rabczuk, Warszawa 2001.

to the need to develop the concept of “*lifelong learning*”, understood as a prerequisite for building a knowledge society. This concept was already being promoted at the time, particularly by the institutions of the European Union and the Council of Europe.

Following the political transformation, and especially since Poland began accession negotiations for membership in the European Union in 1998, there has been growing interest in the educational systems of the European Community countries and the changes occurring in the education sector within those countries. Particularly popular at the time were the concepts of European education and the “European dimension in education”, which translated into the introduction of curricula of content related to the process of European integration, the activities of the EU institutions, the Council of Europe and the promotion of language teaching, especially in Western European countries. Among Polish educational comparativists, Rabczuk emerged as a prominent figure as he became the leading promoter of the “European dimension in education”.²⁹ In the 1990s, he was the first to attempt to analyse the level of implementation of the “European dimension in education” in all European Union member states.

Rabczuk proposed a dual understanding of the “European dimension in education”. In a narrow sense, the *European dimension* meant enriching the content of the compulsory curriculum with issues related to raising European awareness among the younger generation. The author drew attention to the relevance of teaching children and young people about European history and the history of European integration, as well as the history of European culture. He emphasised the importance of providing students with a basic knowledge of the activities of the EU institutions. In a broader sense, the “European dimension in education”, according to Rabczuk, implied various forms of activities and institutional initiatives undertaken by European organisations and member states of the European Community and the European Coun-

²⁹ W. Rabczuk, *Promocja europeizmu w szkolnictwie krajów wspólnoty Europejskiej*, in: *Szkola i nauczyciel a integracja Europy*, ed. R. Gerlach, E. Podoska-Filipowicz, Bydgoszcz 1993, p. 41.

cil.³⁰ In this sense, it was essential to emphasise the social dimension of education, which showed European citizens the benefits of education in a united Europe. Rabczuk pointed out that cooperation between the Community institutions and the governments of the Member States in the field of education would contribute to strengthening the sense of community among the European people, enabling the education of Europeans as informed citizens who respect democracy, the rule of law and human rights in the long term.

Rabczuk was personally involved in the practical implementation of the “European dimension in education”, establishing Inter-school European Clubs in several Warsaw schools. The initiative of European School Clubs was designed to involve teachers and students to promote knowledge about Europe and the process of European integration, thus fostering in them the sense of European unity, attitudes and competencies necessary to fully participate in European society. Moreover, as a lecturer in comparative education, Rabczuk understood the need for new monographs in this area, and he was keen to undertake editorial work on publications produced by Eurydice (Information Network on Education in Europe).³¹ These studies filled a gap in the Polish literature regarding comparative education following a political transformation. The studies proved to be quite popular not only among students of pedagogy and other subjects related to educational policy and the sociology of education but also among teachers and educational authorities.

The progressive integration of Europe and the growing curiosity in education across different nations led Rabczuk to concentrate his research on Western European education, private schooling and the influence of the European Community’s integration processes on member

³⁰ Ibidem, pp. 112–113.

³¹ See: *Kształcenie przedszkolne i podstawowe w krajach Unii Europejskiej*, ed. W. Rabczuk, translated by I. Michałowicz, Warszawa 1994; *Kształcenie przedszkolne i podstawowe w krajach Unii Europejskiej: suplement: sytuacja w Austrii, Finlandii, Szwecji i w krajach Europejskiego Stowarzyszenia Wolnego Handlu (EFTA)/Europejskiego Obszaru Gospodarczego (EEA) (Islandia i Norwegia)*, ed. W. Rabczuk, translated by I. Michałowicz, Warszawa 1996; *Struktury systemów kształcenia ogólnego i zawodowego w Unii Europejskiej/ Komisja Europejska*, translated by the team, ed. W. Rabczuk, Warszawa 1998.

states' educational systems. Rabczuk admitted that it was after the collapse of the bloc of socialist countries that large-scale comparative research was possible. He wrote: *The assumption that socialist schooling and education constituted a universal model and criterion of evaluation for the schooling and pedagogical thought of other countries was not conducive to respecting the canons of research objectivity.*³² He was, therefore, aware of the challenges researchers faced when dealing with the education of Western countries during the communist period. Only after the political transformation did Rabczuk get the opportunity to conduct extensive research in this field without encountering any obstacles.

Rabczuk devoted much of his attention to the study of private schooling in Europe and Poland. He presented these complex problems in three works: a comparative study titled *Szkolnictwo prywatne w wybranych krajach Europy Zachodniej (Private Schooling in Selected Western European Countries)* and monographs titled *Szkolnictwo prywatne w Europie Zachodniej i w Polsce i Szkolnictwo prywatne na świecie (Western Europe, Polish and Private Schooling in the World)*.³³ He used an international questionnaire as the basis for his analysis, which was distributed via the IBE to the ministries of education and offices of religious education in European countries. His research also drew on a wealth of source material and numerous thematic studies, and he was able to obtain unpublished source material through personal contacts with educational institutions abroad. Rabczuk also employed statistical data collected by Eurydice.

He presented the characteristics of private education in Europe on a representative sample of Western European countries. Using France as an example, he demonstrated how public schools operate in a secular and centralised education system. For the United Kingdom, he showed the different, decentralised management of education and the phenomenon of traditional, elite schools. German education, on the contrary, was an example of educational governance in a federal system. The choice

³² W. Rabczuk, *Szkolnictwo prywatne*, 1990, op. cit., p. 8.

³³ See: W. Rabczuk, *Szkolnictwo prywatne*, 1990, op. cit.; W. Rabczuk, *Szkolnictwo prywatne*, 1992, op. cit.; W. Rabczuk, *Szkolnictwo prywatne na świecie*, Warszawa 2000.

of Belgium and the Netherlands was dictated by the shared history of these countries; however, they also showed a strongly developed private education sector that competed with their public education sector. Using Italy as an example, Rabczuk illustrated the pluralism of school institutions and the problems and challenges public schools faced.

His research depicted that, in most cases, the basis of private education in a country was denominational. Private schools, on the other hand, possessed the greatest autonomy and were not subsidised by the state. These schools included secular and experimental schools.³⁴ Comparing the situation of private education in Western European countries, Rabczuk concluded that no fixed relationship exists between the elitism of education and private schooling. If public schools benefited from public or state subsidies and gained state powers, their area of autonomy was subject to either more or less restrictions. Such a situation, according to the researcher, gave rise to pedagogical conformism. In his view, the elitism of public schools in Europe could only be spoken of regarding England, due to the distinctly elitist nature of these establishments (primarily *Public Schools*), which further boasted centuries of tradition and reputation. However, high schools in France and grammar schools in Germany could be considered elite.³⁵

Rabczuk's comparative research was a response to the urgency of educational reforms in the early 1990s in Poland, providing information on how the education sector appeared in developed countries. Presenting the tradition of Polish private education from the inter-war period to the first years after the system transformation, the author emphasised that the point of reference and inspiration for educational reforms should not be restricted to Western European countries, but also include one's own experiences. He suggested that the renewal of Polish education should consider national traditions and current international trends.³⁶ Rabczuk thus regarded comparative research in education as a source of inspiration for introducing necessary educational reforms in the country. He understood that education was a national

³⁴ W. Rabczuk, *Szkolnictwo prywatne*, 1992, op. cit., pp. 22–23.

³⁵ *Ibidem*, pp. 37–38.

³⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 114.

domain, and the proposed changes in education aimed to raise the level of education above all, in line with social change and the current needs of European society.

The monograph titled *Polityka edukacyjna Unii Europejskiej na tle przemian w szkolnictwie krajów członkowskich* (*Educational policy of the European Union against the background of changes in the education of the member states*) describes the influence of integration processes in the European community on education in the member states. The author analysed the legal, organisational and programme solutions applied in this area. He illustrated the historical conditions of integration processes, referring to resource-rich materials. Moreover, he comparatively analysed the relationship between the decisions and regulations of the EU institutions and the socio-economic needs of the member states. On this basis, Rabczuk concluded that while schools in Western Europe had been incorporating Europeanism for years and received support from EU institutions and the Council of Europe through various programs, the comprehensive introduction of the principles of the “European dimension in education” in the EU member states during the mid-1990s was progressing slowly. Hence, much was still to be done in this crucial domain of European integration.³⁷ Rabczuk also considered the subject of EU education policy after Poland’s accession to EU structures. The result of this work was a monograph titled *Polityka edukacyjna Unii Europejskiej: nowe konteksty* (*European Union Education Policy: New contexts*).³⁸

Rabczuk presented the results of further research conducted on private schooling in a subsequent monograph titled *Szkolnictwo prywatne na świecie* (*Private Schooling in the World*). This publication consolidated his academic standing as an outstanding expert on private education. The author pointed out that the main function of private education is not innovation (mainly due to the small number of experimental schools) or compensatory (understood as equalising educational opportunities); rather, its task is to compensate for the deficiencies in the quality of teaching and education in state schools. To a far lesser extent, the

³⁷ W. Rabczuk, *Polityka edukacyjna*, op. cit., p. 173.

³⁸ W. Rabczuk, *Polityka edukacyjna Unii Europejskiej: nowe konteksty*, Warszawa 2007.

function of private schooling has been to offer a curriculum or model of education that varies from the public education model. The author emphasised that the impetus for privatisation measures in education in the 1980s and 1990s primarily originated from Anglo-Saxon countries and the initiatives of the so-called New Right. This political faction saw private schooling as an opportunity for a family, which was defined as the “consumer of education”, to take over responsibility for the upbringing of its children, rather than shifting this responsibility to the state. Simultaneously, there was an assumption that market pressures would force these schools to improve efficiency and teaching levels. Particularly, in the UK, under Margaret Thatcher, the call for an extensive privatisation programme in education was consistently pursued. This trend later spread to other countries across the globe. By the year 2000, approximately 19% of all students in EU member states were enrolled in public schools at both the primary and secondary levels.³⁹

In Rabczuk’s monograph titled *Polityka edukacyjna Unii Europejskiej wobec imigrantów oraz mniejszości narodowych i etnicznych (Educational Policy of the European Union towards Immigrants as well as National and Ethnic Minorities)*,⁴⁰ he undertook the effort to analyse the EU’s legal basis for shaping educational policy towards immigrants, as well as presenting the evolution of national strategies in the field of education of immigrant children in selected countries as a response to the social challenges of the 21st century. The author was critical of the non-compulsory nature of the European Union’s policy to promote the languages, education and culture of national and ethnic minorities. Rabczuk emphasized that due to this reason, it would be challenging to overcome certain stereotypes or influence national strategies concerning the issue of language teaching and education of minority groups.⁴¹

A reflective comparativist, Rabczuk regarded cultural pluralism as an intrinsic and constitutive element of the modern world. He believed that it was necessary to observe education as a new dimension that fo-

³⁹ W. Rabczuk, *Szkolnictwo prywatne*, 2000, op. cit., pp. 7, 31.

⁴⁰ W. Rabczuk, *Polityka edukacyjna Unii Europejskiej wobec imigrantów oraz mniejszości narodowych i etnicznych*, Warszawa 2002.

⁴¹ *Ibidem*, p. 151.

cuses on preparing children and young people to live in a multicultural society. Most importantly, it gave education a considerable role in the further process of European integration.

Conclusion

Professor Wiktor Rabczuk has significantly contributed to the history of Polish comparative education. Rabczuk's scientific achievements were the result of an unconventional path, encompassing many years of dedicated work as a teacher in primary and secondary schools, lecturer and university teacher in Polish universities and teacher in African countries. He was fortunate to work under the scholarly guidance of the eminent educational comparatist Anna Mońska-Stanikowa, and through his extensive work experience in Zaire and Algeria, he emerged as an expert in addressing the complexities in African education. The political transformation and the subsequent initiation of negotiations for Poland's membership of the European Union prompted Rabczuk to focus his research interests on the field of education in Western European countries and issues related to the educational policy of the European community. The result of many years of research includes significant monographs and numerous scientific articles.

Rabczuk's scholarly work was distinguished through his use of the contextual method, which combines the directives of historicism and comparativism, as well as comparative functional analysis. He always utilised resource-rich materials for his analysis, including the archives and educational databases of the EU institutions, the Council of Europe and UNESCO. Following the example of Anglo-Saxon educational comparatists, he referred to the history and traditions of a particular nation to better understand the evolving educational system and the organisation of societies. In this respect, Rabczuk's scientific publications distinguished him among Polish educational comparatists.

Professor Wiktor Rabczuk was also a valued academic teacher; kind and helpful supervisor; and reviewer of numerous master's, doctoral and postdoctoral theses. In Polish pedagogy, he will be remembered as an outstanding educational comparatist and a specialist in Europe-

an education, whose work is an invaluable source of inspiration for researchers investigating current educational issues.

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Elaborations

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