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DOI: 10.17460/PHO\_2020.1\_2.07

## **POPULARISATION OF THE FROEBELIAN APPROACH TO KINDERGARTEN EDUCATION IN “WYCHOWANIE PRZEDSZKOLNE”<sup>1</sup> (1925–1939)**

### **I. “WYCHOWANIE PRZEDSZKOLNE” AND ITS EDUCATIONAL FUNCTION**

After Poland regained its independence, the country’s national preschool system underwent a period of extremely dynamic development. For nursery schools, the innovative direction of didactic and educational operation was established on the basis of major advances in developmental psychology, and new educational concepts. The output of Polish and international pedagogy was propagated by education journals. In terms of substantive content, “Wychowanie Przedszkolne” stood out as one of the most prominent specialist Polish titles. Issued by the Society of Preschool Education<sup>2</sup> and aimed at nursery teachers, the journal was established and run by a prominent educator and social activist – Maria Weryho-Radziwiłłowiczowa. Published between 1925–1939, “Wychowanie Przedszkolne” was initially a monthly, and after 1931 it became a bimonthly, with its Warsaw headquarters at 16/6 Aleja 3 Maja, which was actually a private apartment that Maria, the long-time editor-in-chief, shared with her husband Rafał Radziwiłłowicz (Sosnowska, 2016, pp. 34–36; Wira-Świątkowska, 2010, p. 258).

In the foreword to the first issue, Maria outlined the scope of issues to be discussed in the journal, listing the following items: ‘academic articles of substantive content related to pedagogy; pointers on how to use talks, stories, games, sense-training techniques, practical tasks and other forms of education so that they were enjoyable and useful; updates on the latest developments in the realm

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<sup>1</sup> The title of the periodical can be translated as *Kindergarten Education* (translator’s note).

<sup>2</sup> Towarzystwo Wychowania Przedszkolnego (translator’s note).

of Polish and international preschool education; the development of close-knit professional cooperation between teachers and editors, which included posting readers' questions and experts' answers; the publication of reports and reviews of specialist books and children's literature' (Weryho-Radziwiłłowiczowa, 1925, p. 2).

"Wychowanie Przedszkolne" could boast an impressive list of contributors, including numerous prominent Polish scientists, pedagogues, psychologists, medical doctors, and social activists, whose essays and articles enabled the journal to maintain the highest standards of publication. The actual popularisation of educational patterns applied in preschool education and innovative methods of working with children was, to a large extent, based on translated articles written by foreign authors. Broadly speaking, the journal consisted of two major parts. A section devoted to the theory of education contained texts concerning pedagogy, psychology, and medicine, while a methodological section featured examples of the practical application of solutions aimed at educating small children. Interestingly, the inner layout of the magazine and its subheadings were subject to frequent changes and modifications.

The main priority of the editorial board – and Maria Weryho-Radziwiłłowiczowa's in particular – had always been for the reader not only to comprehend the content, but also to identify emotionally and motivationally with the propagated ideas, since the main purpose of the journal was to promote educational knowledge among preschool teachers, guardians, form tutors, and people without any teaching credentials. The educational and popularising function of the periodical was also apparent in the way it encouraged teachers to broaden their knowledge. To this end, "Wychowanie Przedszkolne" regularly published articles devoted to various pedagogical systems developed by Friedrich Froebel, Maria Montessori, and Jean-Ovide Decroly.

Starting from 1860's, Froebelianism was received with a growing interest on the partitioned Polish lands. Although initially it was only discussed theoretically, it then gradually gained certain institutional forms. Froebel's pedagogical ideas were first introduced in the year 1867 at the reorganized Warsaw-based 9<sup>th</sup> Rev. Baudouin Children's Home. Also, in May 1870 Teresa Mleczkowa opened the first private kindergarten in Warsaw (Wróbel, 1967, p. 17). In Galicia, which received considerable autonomy in terms of education from the Vienna government, kindergartens were established preliminarily as part of women's teacher colleges, such as those founded in 1874 in Lviv and Przemyśl, and one year later in Cracow (Sandler, 1959, p. 199, 205; Wróbel, 1967, p. 22). However, due to social and political conditionalities, Froebel's ideas did not find fertile grounds in Galicia in contrast to the industrialized Congress Poland (see Sandler, 1959, pp. 205–223; Wróbel, 1967, pp. 21–23). It was Maria Weryho-Radziwiłłowiczowa who played a vital role in the popularisation of Froebelianism. In 1880's she completed a two-year course for Froebelian teachers in Petersburg, after which she went to Germany and Switzerland. There, she learnt the methodology of work for kindergartens. After

her return to Congress Poland in 1887, she opened her own Froebelian institution in Warsaw at Chmielna 12. Not only was it an educational facility for children; the institution was also the first to implement a program of practical training for kindergarten teachers (Wróbel, 1967, pp. 20–21, 124 footnote 41; Sandler, 1968, pp. 80–81, 85–93; Leżańska 2008, pp. 59–63. see Bilewicz-Kuźnia, 2013, p. 52; Michalski, 2016, p. 95; Wira-Świątkowska, 2004, p. 155 et al.). Despite numerous restrictions and obstructions imposed by the tsarist authorities, the courses proved a successful training form for female educators. In 1888, Maria Weryho started editing a supplement to “Przegląd Pedagogiczny” entitled *Zabawy i zajęcia dla dzieci w wieku przedszkolnym* (in English: “Games and activities for children at a pre-school age”) which, after three years was incorporated into the journal as a permanent section bearing an evocative name “Ogródek Dziecięcy” (in English: “Kindergarten”); in 1897, Jadwiga Chrzęszczewska replaced her as the editor of the section. “Przegląd Pedagogiczny” supported the training of teachers and educators, provided methodological advice and informed on the latest accomplishments in pedagogy. Apart from Weryho, its authors included such Froebelian teachers – at the same time active as lecturers of courses for preschool teachers – as, among others, Strzemeska, Chrzęszczewska, Unslichtówna, and Roszkowska. The “Kindergarten” section familiarized the readers with Froebelian kindergartens, advocating most valuable aspects of Froebel’s method among teachers and mothers. At the same time, it left out more abstract, mystical ideas of the thinker. The section featured information notes on the latest publications and advancement of sciences, provided examples of games and plays, published reading material and stories, discussed methods of conducting talks and various activities with children (Sandler, 1968, pp. 84–86, 89–93; Bobrowska-Nowak, 1978, pp. 263–264; Michalski, 2016, pp. 95–98). The long-term cooperation of Maria Weryho with Justyna Strzemeska, who she met back in the days of her stay in Petersburg, resulted in the first Polish methodology textbook for kindergarten teachers; the book was based on the Froebelian system, critically analysed and modified, completed with pedagogical experiences of both authors and psychological knowledge (Strzemeska, Weryho, 1895. On the textbook see also Jakubiak, 2015, p. 111; Bilewicz-Kuźnia, 2018a, p. 68 et al.). Throughout the first quarter of 20<sup>th</sup> century, Weryho-Radziwiłłowiczowa remained the main representative of the Polish pedagogy; this school of thought was characterized by adaptation and novel modification of Froebel’s ideas to the needs of preschool education. Hence, in their theoretical and methodological works, Polish Froebelians would select the most crucial and useful elements of the system.

Probably at the initiative of Weryho-Radziwiłłowiczowa, in 1926 “Wychowanie Przedszkolne”, which she edited, published four articles under the collective title *Poglądy pedagogiczne i działalność nauczycielska* Fr. Froebela, in which Froebelianism was propagated by Janina Krasuska-Bużycka (1926a, pp. 1–9; 1926b, pp. 4–8; 1926c, pp. 5–8; 1926d, pp. 1–4). Another opportunity to present Froebel’s life story and professional activities was the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his birth, commemorated with two texts authored by Wanda Bobkowska (1932a, pp. 65–69;

1932a, pp. 98–104) and a report regarding lectures on Froebel held on April 29<sup>th</sup>, 1932 during a celebratory event organised by the Society of Preschool Education (*Report on Lectures on Froebel*<sup>3</sup>, 1932, pp. 104–108).

## II. FRIEDRICH WILHELM FROEBEL AND HIS ROAD TO PEDAGOGY FOR KINDERGARTENS

Friedrich Froebel's pedagogical system was deeply related to his experiences in early childhood and youth, which left their imprint on his sensitivity, spiritual outlook and pedagogical ideas. For this reason, Janina Krasuska-Bużycka and Wanda Bobkowska (Krasuska-Bużycka 1926a, pp. 1–9. Cf. Bobkowska 1932a, pp. 65–69) devoted so much attention to the biography of this remarkable pedagogue, just like other successive researchers of Froebelism<sup>4</sup>.

Froebel's personality was greatly influenced by the premature death of his mother, who passed away when he was only eight months old. At the age of four, he found himself under the custody of his stepmother, who initially went to great lengths to endear herself to her stepson, showing him great care and tenderness. As a consequence, little Friedrich developed a strong emotional bond with her. Sadly this was later broken by the birth of his stepbrother, an event that left him feeling isolated and marginalised. His stepmother's attitude towards him changed, and she became more likely to scold him, criticising his obstinacy and malevolence, which made him suspicious and withdrawn. He found consolation in their small yard, which aroused his interest in nature and gardening, and became the only form of entertainment for a child who was deprived of any contact with his peers. As a pastor's son, Froebel was often seen in the local church, where he listened to his father's sermons and accompanied him during visits to parishioners. This was when Friedrich first came into contact with poverty and suffering, and he learnt that one should love his neighbour and help those in need. Therefore, Christian ethics would become one of the foundations of his future pedagogy (Krasuska-Bużycka, 1926a, p. 2; Bobkowska, 1932a, p. 65. Por. Heiland, 2000, p. 34).

At the age of ten, Froebel moved to live with his uncle Hoffmann in Stadtilm, where he attended the town school. After leaving, he returned to his family home and began to study maths and biology. Having obtained his father's consent, he then joined the University of Jena. Despite a keen interest in lectures on biology, maths, forestry and architecture, he did not manage to complete his studies due to lack

<sup>3</sup> *Sprawozdanie z odczytów o Froebli*

<sup>4</sup> As for the most recent Polish and foreign publications on the subject, noteworthy titles include a monographic article written by a prominent German expert in Froebelism – Helmut Heiland, 2000, pp. 33–55, and the works of Barbara Bilewicz-Kuźnia, a contemporary propagator of Froebelian educational methods, 2013, pp. 39–55; 2014; 2018a, pp. 67–75; 2018b, pp. 47–57. A short synthesis on Froebel and his pedagogical system can be found in an entry within the *Pedagogical Encyclopaedia of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* – Leżańska, 2003, pp. 1189–1191. The following older published studies should also be taken into consideration: Weryho-Radziwiłłowiczowa, 1931, pp. 11–63; Wąsik, 1932, pp. 229–249; Schuffenhauer, 1958, pp. 330–353; Lewin, 1969, pp. 11–38; Bobrowska-Nowak, 1978, pp. 142–154

of funds, as his father refused to pay him the remaining sum of money he had inherited from his mother. This meant that, at the age of eighteen, Friedrich was completely unaided and left to fend for himself financially. As a result, he had to accept a number of unsatisfying jobs: he worked in agriculture, as an office clerk, a secretary and a librarian. At the age of twenty-three, he came into a small sum of money after uncle Hoffmann's death, which allowed him to move to Frankfurt am Main, where he met Gottlieb Anton Gruner, the manager of the city school. Recognising Froebel's exceptional pedagogical potential and his love for tuition, Gruner hired him as a teacher, which made Friedrich realise he had finally found his path in life, and enabled him to devote himself entirely to the art of teaching. At around this time, he also met Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi and learnt about his educational method, which later became a source of inspiration for his further pedagogical research. Quite soon, however, Froebel became aware that the traditional formula of school did not allow for a comprehensive application of Pestalozzi's concepts, so he resigned his post and became a private tutor in the house of the rich Holzhausen family, where he began to home-school three boys. As he was given complete leeway in the matter, in the summer his pupils would learn about nature, working in the fields and doing gardening, while in the winter they would focus on modelling, cutting out geometric figures from cardboard, sculpting and drawing. An avid supporter of Pestalozzi, Froebel took the boys to Yverdon-les-Bains, where he conducted an in-depth study of his pedagogical approach (Bobkowska, 1932a, p. 67; Krasuska-Bużycka, 1926a, pp. 3–4).

At that time, Froebel propounded that school education should be obligatory and recommended introducing preparatory classes (*Kinderklassen*), in which children would be given the opportunity to make up any deficiencies originating from home or nursery schooling. What he also proposed was his own curriculum, with a division of pupils into *Untere Schülerklassen* for those under eleven, and *Obere Schülerklassen* for those between eleven and school leaving age. Lessons were to be held on a daily basis and to last for seven teaching hours with two recess afternoons. The curriculum was to include learning about:

- nature and crops (*Naturbeschreibung*) – two hours a week;
- works of art (*Kunstproduktenbeschreibung*) – two hours a week;
- technology – three hours a week for older children;
- geography (*Erdebeschreibung*) – two hours a week for younger children, and the geography of the fatherland for older children (*Länderkunde*);
- arithmetic for *Untere Schülerklassen* – six hours of spoken lessons a week, and *Obere Schülerklassen* – two hours of spoken and written lessons a week;
- geometry (*Formenlehre*) and drawing – two hours a week for younger children;
- stereometry and drawing (*Größenlehre*) – four hours a week for older children.

Early lessons in the mother tongue were supposed to commence with grammar exercises and mechanical reading of content that became progressively more

difficult over time. On top of that, Froebel also postulated the introduction of singing, religion and calligraphy classes (Krasuska-Bużycka, 1926a, p. 5). A dedicated committee examined his project for elementary school reform – based on Pestalozzi's ideas – for a period of two years, only to reject nearly all its elements (Krasuska-Bużycka, 1926a, p. 5).

Having become more familiar with Pestalozzi's school, Froebel began to notice its numerous shortcomings. Despite the application of the demonstrative teaching method, the quality of tuition left a lot to be desired, particularly with reference to natural science. And yet, Froebel experienced worse problems when it came to matters related to economy, management and nurture, as Pestalozzi was incapable of coordinating all his duties and had to assign some to his assistants. In 1810, Froebel's growing frustration made him leave Yverdon-les-Bains, taking his three pupils along with him. He also changed his opinion on certain matters; he began to recognise the importance and the indispensable role of the father, and he abandoned his former belief that children should be temporarily taken away from their parents in order to enable the educator to exert a greater impact on their upbringing. He started to consider some subjects (drawing, learning about shapes and sizes, mental arithmetic, singing) to be unsuitable for children below eight in the form applied by Pestalozzi. According to Froebel, the preschool period required a more lively and less artificial teaching method, based on observation of natural phenomena, and in which experience would constitute the background of consolidated knowledge. This realisation led him to come up with a thought which he later developed and transformed into a scientific phenomenon: 'Let children use the simplest means to copy what they see'. His stay in Yverdon-les-Bains made him aware that pedagogical flair was not enough to accomplish a thorough school reform. He realised that an in-depth knowledge was a must there, and he and Pestalozzi both lacked it. As a result, he joined the universities in Göttingen and Berlin, where he focused on physics, chemistry, mineralogy, the history of natural sciences, and political studies. His main purpose was to find a unifying set of rules and regulations that governed a man and the world of nature (Krasuska-Bużycka, 1926a, p. 6).

At the outbreak of the 1813 war against Napoleon's France, Friedrich Froebel followed his patriotic impulse and moral duty by joining the army in order to defend 'the spirit and everything else that is sublime and lofty in the German nation'. After the war, he was hired as an assistant at the Weiss Mineralogical Museum in Berlin, and he could continue his education and research work, which he later had to abandon, due to the sudden death of his brother. Froebel moved to Griesheim to look after his three orphaned nephews. When they were joined by his other brother's sons and by another boy, Friedrich formed the very first Froebelian school, which was transferred to Keilhau in 1816. Despite numerous financial issues and problems with premises, Froebel showed a great drive and inexhaustible energy, quite often neglecting his own personal needs. In about 1825, the number of pupils rose to almost 60 children. The school was characterised by a spirit of freedom and respect for pupils, and teaching was based on the children's own interests, and autonomy.

The most important subjects included regional and cultural studies, sports, games and fun activities. Pupils paid visits to industrial plants and craftsmen's workshops, and gained hands-on knowledge of construction, gardening and agriculture. Froebel introduced the so-called Flying Classes (*Fliegende Klassen*), which enabled highly individualised teaching. Pupils did not have to study all subjects with their classmates. Instead, they could join lessons at other – higher and lower – grades, depending on their educational progress. All classes were taught the same subjects, and pupils were not only expected to learn, but also to teach their younger colleagues. The innovative methods implemented by Froebel were frowned upon by proponents of the traditional model of education, and rumours were spread about the anti-religious nature of his school. At that time in Germany, people who opted for reforms and liberties were labelled as troublemakers, and persecuted. And thus, complaints were made about Froebel, who was accused of democratism, and there were demands for the authorities to shut down his school. The government appointed a revisory committee whose aim was to investigate the quality of education and the moods dominating in the facility. Additionally, opponents of Froebel's methods turned most parents of children attending his school against him. As a result, he was left with just seven pupils in 1827 – only a year after he published his first book entitled *The Education of Man (Menschenerziehung)*, a collection of conclusions and observations gathered by the author during a decade of his pedagogical activity (Krasuska-Bużycka, 1926a, pp. 7–9).

The pedagogical views presented in the book interested Georg II, Duke of Saxe-Meiningen, who commissioned Froebel to develop an educational facilities design. The pedagogue prepared an expanded system that incorporated both younger children and teenagers. His previous pedagogical experiences made him pay significantly more attention to preschool education, since he believed that parents often sent children to school who are 'inadequately developed'. As a result, he divided the preschool period into four parts (units) and introduced an extremely detailed timetable, which he later developed when organising kindergartens. He also prepared designs for special-purpose schools (for craftsmen and artists), where pupils could pursue their talents and interests. Even though Froebel's proposals were favourably assessed, they were never truly implemented (Krasuska-Bużycka, 1926a, pp. 6–7). In 1831, he left for Switzerland, where he initially opened schools in Wartensee and Willisau; then he became principal of an orphanage, and later ran an elementary school in Burgdorf (For more information on the Swiss period of Froebel's pedagogical activities, see Krasuska-Bużycka, 1926a, pp. 7–8).

In time, Friedrich Froebel became increasingly more interested in preschool education. In 1832, he arrived in Berlin to survey local orphanages, children's homes, and homeless shelters, which were institutions managed by people without pedagogical credentials who enforced obedience through strict discipline and loud verbal reprimands. Froebel noticed that the existing care and educational facilities were not to the benefit of children, and in 1837 he established his very first

institution for small kids (*Kleinkinderschule*) in Bad Blankenburg. Three years later, he renamed it *kindergarten*, which most aptly reflected the essence of his pedagogical views and ideas (Krasuska-Bużycka, 1926c, p. 5).

Kindergartens gained widespread publicity, which Froebel propagated by touring Germany, giving lectures and sending out informative documentation. In this way he educated society on the importance of preschool education. He also founded more 'school-gardens' in Dresden, Hamburg, Frankfurt, Berlin, Keilhau, and many other provincial towns and municipalities, where such facilities were usually poorly furnished and frequently located in sheds and barns. While touring Saxony, he established a course for future well-qualified nursery teachers in Dresden (Krasuska-Bużycka, 1926d, pp. 1–2).

In 1848, Froebel convened a mass meeting in Frankfurt, where he held lectures and demonstrated his system in practice, with the participation of children. Unfortunately, the philosophical basis of his theory remained poorly understood, and some even considered it to be an uncalled-for nuisance. A number of changes and improvements were advanced, which Froebel found utterly unacceptable. In 1849, he established an educational facility for women in Bad Liebenstein, and the German Women's Association in Hamburg began to issue a journal entitled *Froebel's Wochenschrift*. His ideas began to have a more widespread impact and the number of his supporters grew regularly. Alas, the publication of his nephew Karl's book, entitled *Female Colleges and Kindergartens (Hochschulen für Mädchen und Kindergärten)*, resulted in an official ministerial ban imposed on all kindergartens in 1850. The book was said to have a harmful social effect, and due to confusion with their shared surname (Friedrich was mistaken for Karl), it was also assumed that Friedrich's system was based on socialist foundations which promoted atheism among the youth. Even though Friedrich clarified the misunderstanding in the journal *Dorfzeitung* and delivered all his scientific and pedagogical works to the ministries, the ban remained in force, since it was adjudged that his method did not comply with the fundamental principles of national edification. He felt deeply frustrated and began to question the sense of taking any further teaching initiatives in his fatherland. Paradoxically, however, he was given an extremely warm welcome at the convention of the Union of German Teachers, which left him unimpressed as he had already made a decision to move to America. Sadly, he never made the journey, as he died in June 1852 and was buried in a small cemetery near Bad Liebenstein (Krasuska-Bużycka, 1926d, pp. 2–3).

### III. THE PHILOSOPHICAL FOUNDATIONS OF FROEBELIAN PEDAGOGY

Froebelian pedagogy was developed under the influence of the 19<sup>th</sup> century German idealism, a philosophical movement whose main foundation was a pantheist thesis on the existence of a divine element that is omnipresent in nature and in all man's activities. Froebel identified the divine element as having four



human instincts: labour and knowledge, and artistic and religious inclinations. He believed them to be the major factors determining a child's development at the very first stage of his/her life, which were manifested in the form of fun and playing. A child was expected to grow just like a plant, autonomously externalising his/her intrinsic predispositions and abilities (Bobrowska-Nowak, 1978, p. 144).

The initial chapters of Froebel's works entitled *Raising Children (Kindererziehung)* and *Pedagogics of the Kindergarten (Pädagogik des Kindergartens)* contain the philosophical foundations of his pedagogical activity. Janina Krasuska-Bużycka (1926b, p. 4) quoted the exact wording of its most illustrative extract: *An eternal law pervades and rules all things. It is clearly expressed in external phenomena, and in the inner world of nature and spirit. Underlying this universal law is a living, wise and ever-lasting Unity – God. Everything originates from this unity, and its existence shows this divine element. This is the purpose and the destiny of everything, and as a perceptive and rational being, man has a special purpose* (Krasuska-Bużycka, 1926b, p. 4). For Froebel, the main task of raising human beings was to evoke the divine element in them in order to direct them towards free and conscious pursuit of their earthly vocation, and to show them the path and means leading to this goal. At the same time, a specific objective of raising children consists in the formation of useful members of the society; such members, based on their mental and moral development, will be able to rise up to brotherly love, leading human beings to implement the idea advocated by the Savior (Krasuska-Bużycka, 1926b, p. 4). According to Froebel, the divine plan can be learnt by an analysis of how the human body develops. He believed that every human being must develop from within, individually and freely, in accordance with the eternal law as the divine element that is present in all things is also present here. It is the destiny and vocation of all things to develop their own essence and thus, demonstrate divinity in external and fleeting shapes. Therefore, one should discover the true essence to be developed in every child. A kindergarten teacher should be particularly reserved, and the education process – more passive. Even when teaching, one must remember that the task of a teacher is to extract from human beings rather than put anything into them. (Krasuska-Bużycka, 1926b, s. 4). A child is part of nature and humankind, and thus, his/her development is conducted by the same laws that rule nature and humankind. One must study and learn these laws, and then make them the basis of education. An individual is part of the whole, and at the same time, he or she constitutes an autonomous element that is governed by its own laws and requirements. Therefore, one must pay special attention to the individuality of each child. Froebel emphasised the significance of the triad of life, activity and cognition. In comparison with Pestalozzi, he most definitely restricted the educator's role, assuming that the starting point of education and nurture should lie in the child's activity, in which he saw the divine beginning (Krasuska-Bużycka, 1926b, p. 4).

#### IV. THE PICTURE OF FROEBELIAN KINDERGARTEN PEDAGOGY IN “WYCHOWANIE PRZEDSZKOLNE”

One of the main propagators of Froebelian kindergarten pedagogy was Janina Krasuska-Bużycka, who presented the fundamental principles of Froebelism in her first article on the subject. She commenced her elaborations with the Froebel's thesis that an instinct for creation and shaping is typical in children and manifested in their desire to touch and turn everything and to change their surroundings. When autonomous activities are not suppressed but appropriately channelled, children are more than happy to contemplate the effects of work reflecting their thoughts. This way the child satisfies his/her own creative instinct, and trains his/her physical and mental abilities. Therefore, nurture should involve *the protection of the inherent development of the elevated personality, bring to life the child's inborn germs and facilitate their growth, and it must also be based on a profound knowledge of the child's nature* (Krasuska-Bużycka, 1926b, p. 5). According to the author, the Froebelian model of education leaves no space for routine and discretion. The educator's role is to perceive the child as a self-contained creature that is capable of self-development and self-improvement, and drives at a sublime ideal. Educational measures should be adjusted to the individual personality, and pedagogical activity must be based on recognising an individual's developmental level at various stages of their life (Krasuska-Bużycka, 1926b, pp. 4–6).

Krasuska-Bużycka emphasised that – according to Froebel – the child's most primal need is freedom of movement, so when we restrain his/her body, we also restrain his/her mind and spirit. He wrote 50 songs with illustrations that gave practical hints for games and exercises, and were aimed at children under four. The collection was given the title of *The Songs and Music of Friedrich Froebel's Mother Play (Mutter und Koselider)*. Making rhythmical movements in step with songs is very pleasant for the child, whose natural activeness and mobility is extremely beneficial for the harmonious development of his/her body. Gradually, the child's movements become more conscious and autonomous, and the increase in awareness is accompanied by the development of his/her own will. Mobility is always related to mental curiosity and the desire to touch and examine each unknown object. Froebel noticed that not only are children eager to touch items, but they also try to change their appearance. Through drawing or by means of pliable materials, they strive to reflect shapes which they already know (Krasuska-Bużycka, 1926c, pp. 5–6).

Krasuska-Bużycka devoted a great deal of attention to that inseparable part of each orphanage and nursery – the garden, in which children could maintain regular contact with nature. She explicitly indicated that the name of the Froebelian educational facility represented a deeper and more symbolic thought, namely that a child requires nurture, just like a plant. In kindergartens, children were to be given an upbringing that was concordant with their own character, and with God and nature. Krasuska-Bużycka also emphasised that Froebel believed

that in the earliest stages of his/her life, a man is a creature that absorbs food for flesh and spirit, and thus, he or she should not be exposed to anything that is sick or filthy. Not only did this cleanliness refer to the premises, facilities and equipment, but also to fresh air and gentle light. Anything in children's surroundings was supposed to be bright and pleasant, just like a mother's face, radiating with warmth and love (Krasuska-Bużycka, 1926c, p. 5).

While recounting the foundations of Froebel's pedagogy, Krasuska-Bużycka extensively discussed his educational methods. Since children will also begin to display moral feelings, passions and self-awareness, they need attention and nurturing. The essence of education is to direct spontaneous activities so that they would not lead to selfishness. The growth of strength is accompanied by a thirst for knowledge and eagerness to visit a garden, a field, a meadow and a forest. From these places, the child returns with various discoveries and questions: What is it? What is it called? Where does it come from? Why is it there? And he or she uses the answers to consolidate and preserve terms, concepts and images. Games and fun are essential in the child's life, as they represent his/her work, a serious activity, an intellectual and creative effort. Thanks to games and fun, children gain specific information, train their willpower, feelings and character, and build an attitude towards other people. One of the major objectives that Froebel set for kindergartens was the application of games and fun for educational purposes through the appropriate provision of measures (materials for play). Children can play with almost anything that they find on their way, giving an object an appropriate meaning. And since play materials cannot be coincidental and one-dimensional, Froebel systematised those that are suitable for having fun, on the basis of the demonstrative teaching method and children's passion for activity and mobility. He used their most favourite toys: balls and pellets, pebbles, sand, sawdust, clay, paper and yarn. Such play materials were supposed to develop intellect through improving sight, hearing and touch. Apart from pencils and paints traditionally used in art lessons, Froebel introduced needles and scissors, which had previously been considered too dangerous. What is more, he added some activities that enabled children to release their creative and recreative energy and abilities, i.e. shaping, cutting out, carving, drawing, and weaving, which meant that a child could – as far as possible – make his/her own toys.

Activities taken by children have a deep meaning and foundation. In their eyes, everything is alive, and their mind is strongly attracted by what shapes and colours might resemble. Therefore, Froebel tried to channel children's attention to specific things, and at the same time, he protected the world of a child's imagination. He attributed great importance to an artistic talent, so he introduced music and poetry into his games. The initiation and organisation of such games was often left to children, as Froebel realised that play is the realisation of willpower, and can improve firmness, agility and lucidity. Physical exercises conducted in kindergartens were divided into procession games and marching that required a sense of rhythm. Krasuska-Bużycka noticed that some of the games

were connected with the so-called 'Froebel gifts', i.e. play materials that children could freely use to satisfy their natural desire for activity and creation. Thus, she devoted a substantial amount of attention to these materials as devices that shaped constructive abilities. Froebel created a system of gifts that were strictly related to the individual stages of children's development. He commenced with non-complex elements, e.g., with a ball which was supposed to represent such external sensations as light, colour, sound, movement and shape. Spheres, cylinders, and cubes formed children's notion of variety and the properties of shapes. During the next developmental stage, the child would attempt to learn about the properties of object, and thus, Froebel provided him/her with toys that could be taken apart into pieces: a box of cube-shaped wooden blocks. From then on, the child would become a builder, and the building material would be gradually expended. The third gift was a wooden cube divided into eight smaller cubes which allowed for numerous new possibilities for play and construction. The fourth gift was a cube consisting of eight bricks, and the fifth one – of twenty-seven cubes (all together thirty nine pieces). The sixth gift was as another cube consisting of twenty-seven bricks (eighteen solid cubes, six columns, and twelve flat square blocks). Construction classes were always accompanied by story-telling, e.g., interesting tales that influenced children's imaginations. Froebel provided a number of model tales, but he left a great deal of space for a teacher's initiative. What children want to hear about in such a story is anything that they feel, live and breathe but cannot express. A tale and a story presents other people, other relationships, times and dimensions in which listeners want to find themselves. The ability to tell stories in an interesting way was a talent that Froebel held in high regard (Krasuska-Bużycka, 1926c, pp. 6–8).

Krasuska-Bużycka also accounted that during construction classes children were given a great deal of autonomy, but teachers made sure that their work was meticulous, careful and based on the implementation of one specific order, i.e. that they created rather than destroyed things. Not limiting his operations to kindergartens only, Froebel opened shops selling his toys and gifts, and he also began to issue the journal *Sonntagsblatt*, where he demonstrated his educational ideas. The main motto of the periodical was his best known dictum: 'Let us live for our children' ('Kommt, lasst uns den Kindern leben') (Krasuska-Bużycka, 1926d, p. 1).

Krasuska-Bużycka evaluated the Froebelian system from the perspective of the preschool pedagogy developed in the 1920's. She noticed no discrepancies between Froebel's teachings and the pedagogical ideals of this New Education. She emphasised the fact that Froebel had based his educational system on his knowledge of a child's character, gained through intelligent observation of children. For him, the starting point of nurture was interest, as he considered it to be a subconscious voice of nature and a manifestation of child's deepest needs. And it was the teacher's role to assist nature by providing the child with circumstances that were most favourable for the transformation of the external world. Following nature, the educator was supposed to base education on innate aspirations and to develop

and improve new skills and activities. Froebel believed that games and fun were the first link that connected action with life, and thus, he skilfully used and developed children's passion for games and manual work. Froebel's gifts were an educational means that led to the harmonisation of internal and external needs, while an active cooperation increased the sense of camaraderie among children and was their initiation into social life (Krasuska-Bużycka, 1926d, pp. 3–4).

In the celebratory lecture held to commemorate the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Froebel's birth, Krasuska-Bużycka presented his achievements against the background of the 19<sup>th</sup> century knowledge of educating children. She pointed out that until the 1850's, preschool facilities were mainly institutions that supported mothers who worked outside home. More often than not, their personnel had no pedagogical credentials, children were expected to behave passively, quietly, and to sit in one place, and corporal punishment was the most commonly applied correctional measure (*Report on Lectures on Froebel*, 1932, pp. 104–105).

Froebel was first to transform kindergartens into genuinely educational institutions that boasted a clearly stipulated code of practice, based on expertise in child psychology. A warm and cordial attitude towards children replaced the previously applied system of punishments and rules. Pupils were allowed to follow their instincts and satisfy their natural need for action and mobility. Under the watchful eye of competent teachers, they could expand their conceptual knowledge and develop social feelings (*Report on Lectures on Froebel*, 1932, pp. 104–105).

Friedrich Froebel used children's most beloved toys as educational props: balls, pebbles, clay, paper and yarn. He selected play materials that enabled pupils to develop their creative abilities (sawdust, sand, clay, lead pencils for writing on small slates, pencils, paper and paints). He did his best to provide children with appropriate conditions that would facilitate the development of positive traits and shape their aesthetic inclinations under the influence of the surrounding nature. However, it was not until he devised the kindergarten that he gained the deserved fame as a pedagogue. Froebel believed that a child – just like a plant – required suitable and skilful nurture. He perceived a child as a future adult, and as such he wished to protect and develop the noble traits and features of the child's character. He believed that unfavourable social circumstances could have a negative impact on a child's character, but he argued that even those children that seemed stubborn, unkind and wilful were noble by nature. Among such social unfavourable social circumstances he listed excessive hostility, frequently applied punishments, naive indulgence, neglect and extreme poverty. Therefore, he strongly emphasised the necessity to cooperate with the child's family home. The educator should be a role model, offer advice and provide useful hints, which could improve the atmosphere in the family. At his times, Froebel was accused of atheism and spreading subversive ideas, and yet his philosophy was based on Christian beliefs, as he perceived the Creator as the highest ideal and discerned the divine element in all human beings, which he advised to nurture. The allegation of his subversive activity must be considered through the prism of suspicion and

anxiety that characterised German authorities after the Spring of Nations (*Report on Lectures on Froebel*, 1932, pp. 104–105).

Summarising her lecture, Krasuska-Bużycka stated that the Froebelian system prevailed despite all the attacks, persecutions, and even the ban on kindergartens. Opponents reproached Froebel for becoming fixed in his ideas, and his pedagogical methods and tools, especially the gifts, were considered excessively artificial. According to Krasuska-Bużycka, however, historical sources clearly indicate that he was an excellent pedagogue, who could raise children's interest, and that his educational toys aroused their enthusiasm. Even if Froebel's philosophical views did not gain popularity, the educational system based on love and understanding of children received approval in the modern educational psychology. The lecturer also remarked that Froebel's method had been continually modified and expanded with new ideas. Its core, however, has remained untouched, still focusing on love for children and knowledge, which is reflected by what Froebel himself was alleged to have said: *Follow the idea, not the form!* (*Report on Lectures on Froebel*, 1932, pp. 105–106).

A noticeably more critical approach to Froebel's pedagogical concepts was adopted by Wanda Bobkowska, who described the prominent pedagogue as a peculiar figure: an enthusiast, but also an eccentric and a maniac, who relentlessly looked for new realms of activity and some deeper meaning of life (Bobkowska 1932a, pp. 65–69). She emphasised the fact that the changing fortunes of his youth and his early passions had pushed him towards natural and philosophical studies. Combined with a somewhat pantheistic religious mysticism, his keen interest in nature and philosophy predisposed his mind for fantastical philosophical concepts, to which he remained faithful for the rest of his life. A philosophical issue that he found particularly absorbing was Plato's idea of unity. Froebel wanted to confirm its presence both in the spiritual sphere and in the world of natural phenomena. The sphericity of globose phenomena provided him with the argumentation to prove that the globe was the proto-shape of unity (Bobkowska 1932a, p. 66). Bobkowska was also critical about Froebel's theoretical deliberations, which she often described as vague, convoluted and fantastical. On the other hand, she valued the conclusions and practical activities that he based on these deliberations (Bobkowska 1932b, pp. 98–104). She believed that the psychological views on which Froebel constructed his system of preschool education were noticeably tinged with emotions and quite idealistic, since *he loved and believed in the child*. Quoting Jean-Jacques Rousseau, he claimed that everything that a child is to become is hidden within the child and it must develop from the inside. Just like Rousseau, he argued that children are more prone to do good than evil, and even those who seem stubborn, unkind and wilful have inner inclinations for everything that is good. Froebel believed that children are most often victims of boring educational and pedagogical activities, which are based on punishment, and that it is negative external factors that most commonly harm and distort children.

According to Bobkowska, Froebel had an idealistic and overly intellectualised outlook on the psyche of children, which made him perceive children as ‘small philosophers’ who discover the divine element in themselves and recognise the unity of their life with the life of nature. Basing his deliberations on the assumption of unity, Froebel found individuality and an exceptional nature in every child, and he stipulated that these traits should be favoured and respected. For him, the main feature of the child-like nature was developmental impulses – mobility, and an eagerness to act and develop freely. It was the role of parents and educators to support this innate drive towards activity and creation, which Froebel attributed to religious matters – the child was created in the image and likeness of God, and thus, he or she had the divine spark of God’s creative force. On the other hand, labour was a man’s innate ability – a repetition of the Creator’s actions. In children, the creative power was mainly manifested when they played and had fun, and, therefore, it was the most essential factor of their development (Bobkowska, 1932b, pp. 99–101).

Bobkowska stressed the relationship between children’s creativity and nature, so typical of Froebelian philosophy, which was also related to a passion for travelling and having fun in the bosom of nature. In the backyard and in the garden, among flowerbeds, children create their own world, full of cognitive and educational moments. They watch how plants grow and develop, they learn how to look after them, and they become aware that the beauty of blossoming flowers is their reward for their gardening effort. In Froebelian pedagogy, the drive to respecting children’s individuality did not exclude the need for evoking their social feelings. Therefore, each school garden consisted of small plots owned by individual pupils and a shared area that they all cultivated together. Groupwork generated a sense of community, collaboration and mutual assistance. And when the weather was not favourable enough for children to work outside, the Froebelian system allowed them to do some manual labour inside, using paper, cardboard, or doing modelling, etc., which was the essential constituent of the whole philosophy. A colourful chalk, brushes and pencils would introduce children to the world of written signs, while their natural mobility could be released through more dynamic activities combined with singing, since songs were also a crucial educational factor. At the same time, linguistic and moral development were taught through stories, tales and rhymes (Bobkowska, 1932b, pp. 101–102).

Bobkowska devoted a considerable amount of her attention to the toys that Froebel called ‘gifts’. Firstly, she discussed rainbow-coloured balls, stating that Froebel was fascinated with mysticism and attributed various magical properties to the ball, and above all, emphasised its value in training sight and its usefulness in miscellaneous games and sports. Cylinders, cubes consisting of a growing number of smaller bricks and blocks, colourful squares and triangles to make stars, rosettes and other patterns, as well as plaiting and embroidery sets were other ‘Froebel gifts’ that allowed children to train their senses and muscles, to learn about various shapes, properties and features of matter. Above all, these were

a source of aesthetic development, which helped children to explore their own artistic talents. Somewhat by the bye, the play materials would also enable children to learn the basics of geometry and arithmetic. Despite his idealistic outlook on child and his/her inner developmental power, Froebel did not believe, however, that autonomous play could develop all children's innate forces and abilities (Bobkowska, 1932b, pp. 102–103).

Recapping her deliberations, Bobkowska made an attempt to address the issue of what elements of the Froebelian system had stood the test of time, and which ones already had become relics of the past by the early 1930's. The idea of kindergarten as such survived and prevailed in the interwar period. Other aspects that were still valued in 20<sup>th</sup> century pedagogy were the kind-hearted, warm and friendly attitude of the educator towards pupils, a belief in the child's good-natured instincts and the fact that sources of evil should be looked for elsewhere, respect for a child's individuality and his/her creative initiative, recognition of creative elements as the starting point of education, and the pedagogue's intuition as the foundation of his work. What is more, structural psychology in the interwar period credited Froebel for perceiving the child's psyche as a unique entity, and fully confirmed the educational and pedagogical value of his games and play. The child's close contact with nature and exposure to its beneficial effects still remains an ideal solution for all who love their children dearly, while more modern pedagogical systems have taken Froebel's belief in children's creative intuition further, by eliminating compulsion and offering children the autonomy to choose their activities.

The fiercest criticism centred on the 'Froebel gifts', since balls, cubes, cylinders, squares and triangles are geometric figures that are not observed in nature in their purest form, which makes them unfamiliar to the child and relatively unrelated to its life and surroundings (Bobkowska 1932b, pp. 103–104).

During her anniversary lecture held on the premises of the Society of Preschool Education, Maria Uklejska recapitulated and evaluated Friedrich Froebel's activities from the perspective of the 1930's pedagogy. She argued that his educational system was marked by the spirit of the epoch, and yet it also contained solid and lasting elements, and views which remained legitimate and prevailed some 100 years later, as some were even confirmed by modern science. The typically 19<sup>th</sup> century components were the name of 'kindergarten', an admiration for geometric figures, and the romantic call for children's rights to freedom and an autonomous education, with the proviso that Froebel's attitude still remained a permanent contribution to modern pedagogy. On the other hand, a definite novelty was his educational objective described as 'comprehensive development of the child's innate predispositions and abilities, concordant with the principles of education and nurture'. In that matter, Froebel was well ahead of his time, as an indisputable forerunner of educational work that 'originated from the child', i.e. based on his/her natural traits and abilities (*Report on Lectures on Froebel*, 1932, pp. 106–107).



Uklejska considered the following Froebelian educational measures as modern:

- a) the application of physical exercises, games and activities, the use of variously shaped and coloured play materials for training the senses, and learning songs and melodies;
- b) satisfying the child's eagerness to be active (procession games, playing with balls and 'gifts');
- c) evoking social and religious feelings in the child, the development of his/her emotional sphere through appropriate talks and stories, and the teacher's personal influence;
- d) the elimination of undesired habits and behaviours, and generating appropriate traits and features for social interaction.

Among the enduring values of Froebelism related to preschool education, Uklejska listed the following phenomena:

- a) his attitude to children – full of love, kindness and intuition;
- b) the conviction that early childhood is an extremely important stage of our development, requiring rational and purposeful care;
- c) the recognition of children's fun, play and creativity (*Report on Lectures on Froebel*, 1932, pp. 107–108).

Thanks to the texts published in “Wychowanie Przedszkolne”, readers would have a profound insight into the life and professional activities of Friedrich Froebel. Their authors did not confine themselves exclusively to the popularisation of his educational ideas, but they also made attempts to make a substantive evaluation of his output and achievements, analysed through the prism of the 1920's and 1930's preschool pedagogy. Despite the relatively common criticism of his pantheistic conceptions and the resulting theoretical deliberations, Janina Krasuska-Bużycka, Wanda Bobkowska and Maria Uklejska argued that Froebelism – as a system based on a love for and an understanding of children – lost none of its value, but did undergo some creative modifications. Similarly, the concept of *kindergarten* never became outdated, either, and it revolutionised the standards of 19<sup>th</sup> century preschool education, based on the knowledge of child psychology. All the authors agreed that the Froebel's most tremendous achievements were laying the foundations for modern nursery pedagogy, and the accentuation of the significance of childhood, which requires rational and purposeful care. Articles published in “Wychowanie Przedszkolne” perfectly matched the ground-breaking Froebelian school of thought represented by Weryho-Radziwiłłowiczowa, its editor-in-chief, involving a creative modification of Froebel's concepts and adjusting them to the needs of modern kindergarten education.

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### ***Popularisation of the froebelian approach to kindergarten education in “Wychowanie Przedszkolne” (1925–1939)***

#### **Summary**

**Aim:** The article discusses popularisation of Friedrich W. Froebel’s approach to kindergarten education in the “Wychowanie przedszkolne” journal. The paper is composed of four parts. In the first one, the author presents “Wychowanie Przedszkolne”, including the issues it dealt with, education and popularization function of the journal as well as the most important initial signs of how the idea of Froebelianism was received on Polish lands, focusing in particular on the

role played by Maria Weryho-Radziwiłłowiczowa. The second part of the article is a biographical outline of Friedrich Froebel, depicting his life experience and choices that shaped him as a human being and a pedagogue. In the third part of the article, philosophical foundations of Froebelianism have been presented. And finally, the fourth part, which is most significant for the issue under discussion, contains a description and analysis of Froebel's pedagogy based on the articles published in "Wychowanie Przedszkolne".

**Methods:** a critical analysis of the source material.

**Results:** an analysis of the source material, i.e. articles promoting pedagogical methods of Friedrich Froebel in "Wychowanie Przedszkolne" (1925–1939), whose founder and editor-in-chief for the whole period of its publication was Maria Weryho-Radziwiłłowiczowa, an eminent advocate of Froebelianism.

**Conclusions:** in the years 1925–1939, "Wychowanie Przedszkolne" published several articles devoted to Friedrich Froebel, his pedagogical activity and organization of kindergartens. The texts authored by J. Krasuska-Bużycka, W. Bobkowska and M. Uklejska not only familiarized the readers in depth with the views of this prominent pedagogue but also presented contemporary evaluation of his pedagogical ideas. The authors appreciated in particular the love for children and understanding their needs, emphasis on children's age and the novel idea of kindergartens. The papers published by "Wychowanie Przedszkolne" perfectly matched the Froebelian school of thought represented by its editor-in-chief M. Weryho-Radziwiłłowiczowa.

**Keywords:** "Wychowanie Przedszkolne"; Polish pedagogical journals (1918–1939); Friedrich Froebel's biography; Froebelian pedagogy; propagation of Froebelian concepts in Poland (1918–1939).