

Social background of the students of Teacher Training Colleges in Poland from 1918–1937

Summary

Teacher Training Colleges educated elementary school teachers . They were meant to be temporary, but in reality, they survived almost throughout the entire interwar period, from 1918 to 1937. They existed mainly in smaller towns and even in villages, and were distributed evenly across the country. They undertook the task of teaching young people who had completed elementary school, and the training period lasted five years. The students came from different backgrounds, but mainly from poorer families. Youth from families of small farmers and craftsmen predominated. A relatively large number of students also came from the families of farm and factory workers, domestic service, railway workers and postal workers. It is assumed that approximately 65% of students came from the most materially disadvantaged backgrounds. The reason that these young people undertook studies in teacher training colleges was determined primarily by economic considerations. The tuition in the state institutions (and they were the most common, usually a little over 60%) was free of charge. The only costs were small fees related to materials for practice and papers. Moreover, out-of-town students could live in a boarding school where fees were lower than in other lodgings. The poorest students could apply for scholarships and also for special grants in select cases. As a result of these forms of financial support, young people from poorer backgrounds were able to continue their education. Teacher Training Colleges played an important role in the Polish educational system. Thanks to them, all public schools had fully qualified staff by the thirties. What is more, the teachers educated in teacher training colleges gained a profession that enjoyed a high level of social recognition.

Keywords: teacher training college, school, teacher, financial support, boarding school, scholarship.