

Secondary forest education in Poland

Andrzej Grzywacz

ARTICLE

Abstract

The paper presents the beginning of secondary forest education in Poland. Changes in the education system after World War II have been described. Secondary schools under the control of the Ministry of the Environment as well as private entities have been presented. Currently, there are 27 institutions preparing for the profession of a forester.

Key words: history, secondary forest schools, Poland

Streszczenie

Przedstawiono początki średniego i niższego szkolnictwa leśnego w Polsce, które zaczęło kształtować się w drugiej połowie XIX wieku, głównie w Galicji oraz Królestwie Polskim. Po odzyskaniu niepodległości, w latach międzywojennych stworzono system szkolnictwa leśnego, tworząc 6 szkół zawodowych oraz 5 szkół dających pełne średnie wykształcenie leśne (w tym licea leśne), z których najbardziej znane mieściły się w Białokrynicy i Żyrowicach. W okresie po II wojnie światowej szkolnictwo tego typu wielokrotnie zmieniano i reformowano, likwidowano niektóre technika, tworzone inne lub zmieniano ich siedziby. Aktualnie (w 2011 r.) funkcjonuje 11 szkół leśnych podległych Ministrowi Środowiska, 13 innych prowadzonych jest przez Starostwa Powiatowe, a 3 to tzw. leśne szkoły niepubliczne. Sieć tego typu szkół nie jest równomiernie rozłożona na tle wielkości powierzchni leśnych w poszczególnych województwach. Poziom kształcenia jest dość zróżnicowany. Stosunkowo najwyższy jest w tradycyjnych technikach leśnych, od 2008 r. ponownie podległych Ministrowi Środowiska. Wyższemu szkolnictwu leśnemu bardzo zależy na wysokim poziomie ogólnym i zawodowym absolwentów średnich szkół leśnych, rozpoczynających studia leśne.

Origins of the secondary forest education

The beginnings of the system of secondary forest education in Poland reach the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and are poorly understood. Their functioning is inadequately described and popularised.

In Polish part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire attempts to establish schools of forestry were made already at the beginning of the nineteenth century but no consent of the authorities was granted. Foresters were aware that the current system of preparation for this profession, rather of 'craftsman' type, consisting of individual apprenticeship of student (candidate for the profession) by an experienced forester, was already insufficient. It was only in 1857 (1850 according to other sources) when a one-year private school was organised and led by Henry Strzelecki in Hołubla near Krasieczyn (eastern Poland). Prince Adam Sapieha supported it financially. The school was preparing candidates for the government examinations for foresters and functioned only until 1867. During its operation it educated tens of foresters (Szylak 2011). Similar school was opened in Bolechów in 1883. At first, it was called the Lower School of the Imperial and Royal Forest and later the Imperial and Royal School of Forestry. This institution was organised and directed until 1889 by Piotr Hirsch, who was also the Head of Property Management and National Forests in Bolechów. Hirsch

was one of the founders of the Galician Forestry Society (Szylak 2011).

Wojciech B. Jastrzębowski, professor at Warsaw University and the Institute of County Household and Forestry in Marymont (now a district of Warsaw), founded in 1860 a forest school, officially called the Department of Practice Forestry in Feliksów near Brok upon the Bug river. The school was dissolved fairly quickly after the January Uprising in 1863 because of the patriotic attitude of the students who proceeded to struggle for independence. Jastrzębowski not only taught forestry, nature, and household in terms of theory and practice but brought his students up and shaped them to enlightened citizens, 'and respectable people'. He belonged to a group of very prominent Polish regionalists and naturalists and was also one of the first authors of the principles of peaceful international policy.

Walery Wróblewski, forester, who later became colonel of the January Uprising, the legendary general of the Paris Commune, in his youth after graduating from St. Petersburg Institute of Forestry and Metrology, was appointed ensign of the Russian Empire Forestry Corps in 1857 and sent to work on the post of deputy manager (officer) of Forest School in Sokółka in Podlasie. In 1861, he was appointed director of the school with the rank of second lieutenant. The school was organised in a military way and trained in the forest administration. At that time, Wróblewski was strongly associated with the underground independence movements. According to the legend, all school students led by Wróblewski joined the January Uprising. As a result tsarist authorities closed the school (Borejsza 2008).

In the years of 1902-1914, Lower School Forest, also known as a school for forest conductors, functioned in Suchedniów. It was located in a building which was previously a seat of the Mining District Board (before its liquidation). Other sources mention very little about the functioning of other forest education institutions of various types and levels of education, such as Drewnica.

Many efforts to create higher and secondary education in the three Polish partitions in the nineteenth century turned to be unsuccessful because of lack of consent of the authorities. Descriptions of those initiatives can be found in various publications, including papers of Jan Miklaszewski, Filip Skoraczewski, and Ignacy Szczerbowski, delivered at the First Congress of Polish Foresters in 1907 in Cracow (Pierwszy... 2007, Chałupka 2008).

Until Poland's regaining its independence in 1918, schools of forestry differed in nature and duration of study. They were shaped by the idea, knowledge and character of the principal and teaching staff. There were no specific standards and the content of training programs were adjusted to administrative schemes prevailing in the countries that Polish lands belonged to (ie. Russia, Austria-Hungary and Prussia).

In the 1920-1930s there were schools for foresters and secondary forest schools with 11-month and 3-year education respectively (tables 1, 2). Vocational education in forestry was provided in six locations while 5 offered secondary schools. In summer months, directorates of the State Forests organised courses for forest guards and training for foresters in some forest districts during the interwar period (Żabko-Potopowicz, Więcko 1965).

One may say that efficient system of vocational and secondary forestry education was set up mainly for the purposes of the State Forestry established in 1924 as well as for private forest estates and larger properties. It was being improved and transformed, however that process ended abruptly in September 1939, with the outbreak of World War II and the Nazi and Soviet occupation of our country.

Broda (2007) describes in some detail the mode, method, organisation and training programs in secondary education devoted to forestry and timber industry, particularly in schools in Żyrowice and Białokrynica. The history of the former forestry education requires further research and search for source materials to document the truth about efficient functioning in difficult times when the country lost independence and was divided into three annexed territories. It must be noted that those schools

did not only educate in the profession of a forester at that time but also taught patriotism and citizenship.

Secondary education after 1945

An overview of employment in forestry made in 1946 showed that half of the field positions were not occupied. The largest shortage occurred on the so-called 'regained lands' (Western Poland). Among the employees about 75% of forest rangers, 40% of foresters and half of office workers did not have adequate education. Thus, urgent short-term six-month courses were organised mostly in training centres of the State Forests in Mrowla, Wierzchowiska, Margonin and Warcino. In the meantime, organisation of the two- and three-year junior secondary schools began in Brynek, Limanowa, Margonin, Zwierzyniec, Rogoziniec, Goraj and Głogów Malopolski. In 1948, those schools were transformed into secondary forest schools. Additionally secondary schools for timber industry were created in Żywiec and Złoty Potok. In 1951, the reform of vocational education turned those schools into 4-year technical secondary schools (technikum leśne) and in 1955 the study was extended to five years.

By the end of 1980s the network of forest schools underwent many changes - some institutions were closed, new ones were opened and some changed their seats. During that period there existed 19 technical secondary schools, 2 technical secondary schools for people already working, 1 post-secondary forest school (forest planning specialty), 4 post-secondary schools for working people and post-maturity exam (for those who have passed secondary school final exams called 'Matura' exams) National Forest Technical School in Tułowice (Drobkiewicz 2006). According to Kaczmarek and Krychiński (1997) 30,660 people graduated from all types of schools in the years 1947-1988. According to Drobkiewicz (2006) the number of graduates of those schools until 2004 was at least 46 thousand. Detailed analysis of the functioning of secondary forest education during the years 1945-1985 was presented by Kaczmarek (1986) at 86th Congress of the Polish Society of Forestry in Błażejewko, with particular emphasis on current and future needs for employment of graduates of such schools.

In 1996, by means of another education reform, secondary schools, including forest ones, went under the supervision of local government authorities. In 2004, the Ministry of the Environment was granted authority to take over supervision of that type of schools provided local authorities granted their approval for such action. According to the data available to the General Directorate of the State Forests, in 2004, there were at least 29 such schools operating all over the country with about 1,200 graduates annually. The State Forests projected their own needs in this period to about 100 graduates.

Current status of the secondary forest education

Currently, 11 secondary forestry schools are under control of the Ministry of the Environment. 13 others are conducted by local government administration. Those include mostly technical secondary schools and forestry classes at vocational schools or other combined schools the most frequently. Since relatively recently, there also operate non-public secondary schools in Chodzież, Lublin and Olsztyn (Table 3). Network of schools for foresters at the secondary level is not evenly distributed around Poland, especially when afforested area is concerned. There are no such institutions in Western Pomerania region and in some provinces with large area of forest only one technical forest secondary school exists (Table 4).

The above described situation shows that new secondary schools arise quite spontaneously according to local initiatives but without central planning or regard to the potential labour market. Some call this situation quite sharply a „free-market capitalism” in the field of education with no regulation of supply and demand (in this case the number of graduates). Probably other schools of

this type may still develop, often without proper support for field activities and practices, relevant teaching aids, textbooks, an appropriate amount of practical training and without much chance for graduates to get a job in the State Forests.

In the draft budget bill for 2012, planned expenditure intended to cover the costs of forest schools subordinated to the Ministry of Environment amounts to 33.6 million zł (mainly for salaries and expenses of the current derivative), and 14.8 million zł to cover the operating costs of boarding at those schools. Forest schools conducted by local governments obtain grants from local budgets. The operation of private schools is largely contributed from fees paid by students' parents.

Generally, secondary forest schools, in particular those conducted under the supervision of the Ministry of Environment, educate young people on a high level, are widely respected and esteemed in society. There is no shortage of candidates willing to become professional foresters. However, the future of this type of schools remains unclear and to a large extent depends on changes of the educational system in the country. The need to create profiled technical colleges as well as education centres, as in the U.S. and many other countries, is often discussed. It depends greatly on the requirements that employers will set, e.g. the State Forests may once conclude that the forester should hold an engineer degree. Already, many young forestry technicians obtain a university degree in forestry in full- or part-time studies. Forestry schools have numerous achievements in the field of education and upbringing, the quantity and diversity of extracurricular activities and interest groups. However, they also have serious housing problems (including refurbishment) and property, personnel, practical training, modern textbooks and teaching aids problem as well as trouble with social base (boarding, tables). Low wages for teaching and auxiliary staff remain an unsolved problem for many years either. It seems that the future of those schools will depend on new regulations that are supposed to be adopted within subsequent reforms planned by the Ministry of Education, since most of them are subordinate to that unit, while only 40% - to the Ministry of the Environment (Grzywacz 2011).

Vocational education, especially for forest machine operators is a neglected direction and produces inadequate number of specialists in comparison to the market needs for that segment of secondary forest education. Forest service enterprises own greater number of highly sophisticated and expensive equipment but have no specialists to operate it. This problem requires a solution soon, though we can already observe some new initiatives in that field (e.g. RDSF in Zielona Góra).

Forest higher education is interested in high quality of secondary education as part of the graduates continue their education at universities in full- or part-time studies. In recent years, decrease in number of candidates for full-time studies who graduated from forestry secondary schools is observed, while on the part-time studies they are in majority, often undertaking studies after several years of work as a forester. It is clear that higher forest education is very interested in good general and vocational preparation of secondary graduates as the higher the initial level the better the university graduates are.

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Table 1. Schools for foresters in Poland in the interwar period

Locality	Period of activity	Localisation	
		county	region
Białowieża	1929 - 1936	bielski	białostockie
Bolechów	1924 - 1938	stryjski	stanisławowskie
Cieszyn	1929 - 1938	cieszyński	śląskie
Krotoszyn	1938 - 1939	krotoszyński	pozańskie
Margonin	1921 - 1935	chodzieński	pozańskie
Zagórz	1922 - 1935	częstochowskie	kieleckie

Table 2. Secondary forest schools in Poland in the interwar period

Locality	Activity	Subjected to
Białokrynica	Since 1924	State Agricultural Secondary School in Krzemieniec
Czernichów	Since 1923	State Agricultural School
Łomża	Since 1923	State School for Metronomy and Forestry
Warszawa	1916 - 1923	Secondary Forest School of Central Agricultural Society
Żyrowice	Since 1923	State Secondary School for Agronomy and Forestry

Table 3. Current institutions educating foresters at the secondary level

A. Schools subjected to the Ministry of Environment
1. Zespół Szkół Leśnych im. Leśników Polskich w Białowieży
2. Zespół Szkół Leśnych im. Polskiego Towarzystwa Leśnego w Biłgoraju
3. Zespół Szkół Leśnych i Ekologicznych im. St. Morawskiego w Brynku
4. Zespół Szkół Leśnych im. J. Kloski w Goraju (Czarnków)
5. Zespół Szkół Leśnych w Lesku
6. Zespół Szkół Leśnych im. Prof. W. Jedlińskiego w Miliczu
7. Technikum Leśne w Rogozińcu (Zbąszynek)

8. Technikum Leśne im. Prof. J. Miklaszewskiego w Staroście (Rzepin)
9. Zespół Szkół Leśnych im. A. Loreta w Tucholi
10. Zespół Szkół Leśnych im. Prof. S. Sokołowskiego w Warcinie
11. Zespół Szkół Leśnych im. R. Gesinga w Zagnańsku
B. Schools subjected to local governments
1. Zespół Szkół w Bałtowie k. Ostrowa Świętokrzyskiego
2. Technikum Leśne przy Zespole Szkół Ponadgimnazjalnych im. J. Kochanowskiego w Garbatce - Letnisku
3. Technikum Leśne w Zespole Szkół Przyrodniczych im. M. Rataja w Głogowie
4. Zespół Szkół Zawodowych im. ks. E. Domańskiego w Iłowie - Osadzie
5. Zespół Szkół Drzewnych i Leśnych w Jeleniej Górze (Sobieszów)
6. Zespół Szkół Powiatowych, Technikum Leśne w Kadzidle
7. Zespół Szkół Ponadgimnazjalnych im. W. Puchalskiego w Meckiej Woli k. Sieradza
8. Zespół Szkół Drzewnych i Leśnych im. Unii Europejskiej w Rucianem-Nidzie
9. Technikum Leśne przy Zespole Szkół Ponadgimnazjalnych w Słupi pod Kępem
10. Technikum Leśne przy Zespole Szkół Zawodowych im. W. Orkana w Starym Sączu
11. Technikum Leśne w Tułowicach
12. Zespół Szkół Drzewnych i Ochrony Środowiska im. J. Zamojskiego w Zwierzyńcu
13. Zespół Szkół Drzewnych i Leśnych w Żywcu
C. Private schools
1. Prywatne Technikum Leśne w Chodzieży
2. Niepubliczne Technikum Leśne w Lublinie
3. Policealna Szkoła Detektywów i Pracowników Ochrony O'CHIKARA, Zaoczne Technikum Leśne pod patronatem SITLiD w Olsztynie

Table 4. Forest technicians training centres and the area of afforested land in regions of Poland

Region	Afforested area [thous. Ha]	Forest technicians training centre
Zachodniopomorskie	801	-
Mazowieckie	797	Garbarka - Letnisko, Kadzidło
Wielkopolskie	762	Chodzież, Goraj, Słupia pod Kępem
Warmińsko - mazurskie	733	Iłowo - Osada, Olsztyn, Ruciane - Nida
Lubuskie	683	Rogoziniec, Staroście
Podkarpackie	661	Lesko
Pomorskie	650	Warcino
Podlaskie	612	Białowieża
Dolnośląskie	587	Głogów, Jelenia Góra, Milicz
Lubelskie	568	Biłgoraj, Lublin, Zwierzyniec
Małopolskie	433	Stary Sącz
Kujawsko - pomorskie	418	Tuchola
Śląskie	391	Brynek, Żywiec
Łódzkie	383	Męcka Wola
Świętokrzyskie	326	Bałtów, Zagnańsk
Opolskie	249	Tułowice

Andrzej Grzywacz
Faculty of Forestry
Warsaw University of Life Sciences - SGGW
andrzej_grzywacz@sggw.pl