BOOK REVIEW


The study presents the results of a research project on the professionalization of the teachers' occupation in Prussia which has been conducted at the Interdisziplinäres Zentrum für Hochschuldidaktik (IZHD) of the Bielefeld University. The author understands by professions "particular occupations, namely scientific occupations" (p. 11). He studies how the teachers' occupation attained this scientific status in the paradigmatic case of the particular group of mathematics teachers. The development of mathematics instruction in Prussia is reconstructed on the basis of extensive evaluation of archival sources. These materials include in particular: the yearly school reports, files of teacher examinations, the reports of the supervisors on the conduct of the teachers, lists of open and filled positions, personal files of teachers and mathematicians, files on mathematics instruction, protocols of the conferences of the directors of secondary schools in the individual provinces, the Nachlässe (heritages) and correspondences of teachers. The studied time period is that between 1810 (the year of beginning of the Prussian educational reform) and 1870 when the process of emergence of the profession of the specialized teacher (for one school discipline) was essentially completed. The evaluation of school's files has been concentrated on the former Prussian provinces Rheinland (industrialized region), Westfalia (agrarian dominated region) and on the capital Berlin, with supplements from the provinces Saxonia (origin of the movement towards restriction of mathematics instruction) and Pommerania.

The presentation begins – after an overview of the prehistory from the 16th up to the early 19th century – with an analysis of two questions: up to what degree has the Prussian reform of education (a high estimation of and a central position for mathematics instruction were a constitutive part of its programmatic principles) in fact been realized in the considered regions? And how did the position of mathematics change within the conceptions of liberal education to about the middle of the century when the ministry of

instruction desisted largely from its former holistic and neohumanistic conception of education?

The kernel of the research can be found in the following chapters: discussing the introduction of age group classes, the institutionalization of scientific teacher education, the results of the teacher examinations at all the Prussian examination boards – giving for the first time exact statistical figures of these examinations between 1810 and about 1865 (the data are arranged yearly, according to the level of qualification and to the varying degree of combination of a mathematical teaching facultas with a facultas in other subjects) –, and the status of the mathematics teachers within the teaching staffs of their school.

These main chapters are followed by two shorter ones which are related more directly to instruction itself. The first discusses the methodology and the success of instruction, mainly on the basis of inspectorate’s reports on instruction, and gives statistical figures on the choice of mathematics as subject of university studies by the Gymnasium graduates. The second chapter deals with the question of to what degree has the autonomy of the teacher to perform his professional activity been restricted by the syllabus, by textbooks and by prevailing ideas about the contents of school mathematics. The study ends by one chapter on essays to establish disciplinary associations and another chapter which gives paradigmatic biographies of teachers selected from the three teacher generations – a sequence by which, as the author shows, the emergence of the profession of a scientific, disciplinary teacher can be characterized.

In an appendix, more than twenty hitherto unpublished documents (expert opinions, petitions, protocols, instructions and teacher’s examination reports) are made accessible, completely or in excerpts. These documents provide illuminating insights into the processes which constituted the emergence of the profession of the scientifically trained mathematics teacher. The book concludes with a detailed listing of the archival files used and of their locations, with an exhaustive bibliography and with an index of names so that the book can also be used as a reference-book.

In order to evaluate the study – so far described in its contents – one has to emphasize the intentions of the author. The study starts from the acute problem of educational policy nowadays if the central position of mathematics instruction within the canon of liberal education (which is essentially an outcome of the 19th century) can be maintained and is legitimate even today. The book intends to transmit to the student teacher of mathematics meta-knowledge about his/her later practical professional activity. “In order to qualify the future teacher for the described controversies in the profes-