

# *Developments in Bulgarian Education: from the Ottoman Empire to the Nation-State and beyond, 1800-1940s*

## *Evolución de la educación búlgara: del imperio otomano al Estado-nación y más allá, de 1800 a 1940*

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**Abstract:** This article aims at presenting the major developments of modern Bulgarian education during the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. It relies on statistical and other primary sources, and on secondary materials, and uses both quantitative and qualitative methods. The first part follows the development of the educational movement among Bulgarians, stimulated by the modernizing Tanzimat reforms (1839-1876) of the Ottoman Empire; the second part – tells the story of the state supported education after the establishment of the Bulgarian nation-state in 1878 up until 1944 when the communist came into power. The article pays special attention to the differences in women's and men's education and the gradual move towards greater gender equality in education during the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

**Keywords:** Bulgarian education; nineteenth and twentieth century; gender; teachers; educational equality and laws.

**Resumen:** Este artículo tiene como objetivo presentar los principales desarrollos de la educación búlgara moderna durante el siglo XIX y principios del XX. Se basa en fuentes estadísticas y otras fuentes primarias, y en materiales secundarios, y utiliza métodos cuantitativos y cualitativos. La primera parte sigue el desarrollo del movimiento educativo entre los búlgaros, estimulado por las reformas modernizadoras de Tanzimat (1839-1876) del Imperio Otomano; la segunda parte, narra la historia de la educación apoyada por el estado después del establecimiento del estado-nación búlgaro en 1878 hasta 1944, cuando el comunista llegó al poder. El artículo presta especial atención a las diferencias en la educación de las mujeres y los hombres y la progresión gradual hacia una mayor igualdad de género en la educación durante la segunda mitad del siglo XX.

**Palabras clave:** Educación búlgara; siglos XIX y XX; género; profesores; igualdad educativa y leyes.

Recibido / Received: 16/11/2016

Aceptado / Accepted: 27/12/2016

## 1. Sources and Historiography

Various sources are preserved regarding the history of education in the South Eastern Europe in official state archives and private collections, memoirs, diaries, in newspapers and journals, brochures, etc. Women's and men's education in South Eastern Europe – in the Ottoman Empire and its successor nation-states, however, has not been systematically studied yet. There are publications in local languages unknown to specialists in the West and some dedicated specifically to women's education: PhD theses, several books, articles, book chapters, etc., some of them written from a feminist perspective. As for Bulgaria in particular, several general volumes on the evolution of the modern Bulgarian education were published, which did not pay special attention to differences in women's and men's education in the nation-state, established in 1878. Some primary sources on girls' education were included in a documentary volume on women in modern Bulgarian society and culture (Daskalova, 1998). Other publications dealing with the peculiarities and discourses of Bulgarian education (and the role of teachers) before and after 1878 consist of collective volumes and monographs (Chakurov, 1982; Daskalova, 1997; Daskalova, 2002; Nazurska, 2003; Daskalov, 2005; Marinova-Hristidi, 2013; Pironkova, 2015).

In what follows I first present the educational movement among the Bulgarians within the Ottoman Empire, prior to the establishment of the nation state in 1878 (including the situation of teachers) and then turn to the history of education within modern Bulgaria up to 1944. I conclude by presenting the general lines of Bulgarian education after 1944. Special attention is paid to the education of women (Daskalova, 2010, pp. 149-164).

## 2. The First Period: Education of Bulgarians within the Ottoman Empire, prior to the Establishment of the Nation State

During the period of the so-called «National Revival» (up until 1878) education of the Bulgarians was a matter of self-organization. It owed a great deal to the initiative of local communities (village or town council, so-called *obshtina*) and special school supervising bodies (*uchilishtni nastoyatelstva*, i.e. school boards) composed of local «notables» and representatives of the guilds. The educational efforts of the Bulgarians were stimulated by the Ottoman reforms during the Tanzimat Period (1839-1876), which created favorable conditions for the cultural developments and emancipation of the non-Muslim population of the Empire.

## 2.1. Men's and women's secular schools

*Elementary.* Until the end of the eighteenth century Bulgarians had only primary schools, so called *kiliyni*, i.e. *cell* schools attached to religious institutions – monasteries or churches. During the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century a new type of *cell* schools appeared thanks to private initiatives – the so-called *obshtestveni kiliyni* schools, i.e. public *cell* schools. They operated with the support of the local communities and were the outcome of economic growth among Bulgarians who increasingly saw education as a road to progress and development. These schools were mostly boys' schools but some girls were also allowed to study there. Historical sources preserve information about 384 such schools that operated until the establishment of the Bulgarian nation state in 1878. They co-existed with various new types of schools which proliferated in the first decades of the nineteenth century, among them Greek and Greek-Bulgarian (*elino-bălgarski*) schools; and *mutual* or *Bell-Lancaster* schools.

The demand for Greek and Greek-Bulgarian schools continued to the 1830s in tune with the Bulgarian cultural orientation toward Greek education as the main mediator of modern Western educational ideas. The first generation of the Bulgarian nineteenth century intelligentsia was educated mostly in Greek schools. The prestige of education and knowledge coupled with wealth and power boosted the attractiveness of «Greekness» among Bulgarians and other peoples in the Ottoman empire. Paradoxically (in view of the subsequent rivalry) nationalism and patriotism entered the Bulgarian context thanks to educational relations with Greeks.

Also via Greeks the Bulgarians learned the so-called *Bell-Lancaster* system of education also known as *alilo-didactic* or *mutual* – very effective for educating a great number of pupils with minimum resources. With the opening of the first Bulgarian (male) mutual school in Garbovo in 1835 the so-called new Bulgarian (secular) education began. For a short time the Gabrovo mutual school developed as a center for preparation of teachers, who wanted to learn and use the *Bell-Lancaster* system. According to some historians up until 1878 Bulgarians had about two thousand elementary schools (of the mutual type) (Dimitrov, 1987).

The movement for women's emancipation among Bulgarians began in the 1840s with the opening, under Greek influence, of several dozens secular elementary (*mutual* or *Bell-Lancaster*) schools for girls, materially supported by local women's initiatives and some rich Bulgarian émigré merchants. The first secular school for girls was established in Plevna (today Pleven) in 1841 by Anastasia Dimitrova (1815-1894) with the support of the Greek bishop Agapiy

of Vratsa and his mother – Evgenia. By the beginning of 1850, thirty-five schools were in existence, rising to ninety by 1878.

Several dozens of (French) Catholic and a couple of (American) Protestant schools established within the Bulgarian lands after the Crimean War of 1853-1856 had a high impact on the development of the elementary education among Bulgarian girls and boys as well (Daskalova, 1999).

*Secondary education.* During the 1840s educated Bulgarian elites radically broke with the Greek influence and oriented themselves towards Slavic Russia. A new type of schools, the so-called *klasni* schools (with reference to the organization of the teaching: the pupils were split into different classes according to their preparation and age) – with two to five grades above the primary *mutual* schools – were established. They were opened by the first generation of Bulgarians, educated in Russia. (Many of the teachers in the *klasni* schools, however, received their education in Greece, Romania, Serbia, Constantinople, and in Western Europe). In the *klasni* schools boys and girls could study social and natural sciences and acquire the highest level of education available within the Bulgarian lands prior to 1878. Several dozens *klasni* schools existed until 1878. During that time some Bulgarian special schools were opened, as well: *pedagogical*, *commercial*, *theological seminarii* (for preparation of priests and teachers); two of the *klasni* schools for boys developed into full *gimnazia*.

Starting from the 1850s *klasni* schools were also opened for girls. Such were established by both women and men. From 1856, when the male teacher Sava Dobroplodni established the first Bulgarian school of this type for girls in Shumen until 1878 there were about twenty schools of this kind. The *klasni* schools for girls were fewer than those for boys. The difference is explained with the prevailing peasant character of the Bulgarian society at the time and traditional patriarchal opinions, according to which women and girls could do without education. Given this fact some liberal parents allowed their daughters to attend boys' *klasni* schools either in the male classes or in special classes for girls, as happened in the town of Shumen in 1874-1875 (Miladinova-Alexieva, 1985, p. 78). While male teachers were invited to teach at *class* schools for girls, the reverse was not allowed, even when women had attained a similar level of education. Not surprisingly, most of the female teachers belonged to intellectual families: they were daughters, sisters or wives of teachers. Some of the best Bulgarian schoolgirls who got their education in Serbian, Russian or Czech high schools with the financial support of existing women's benevolent, philanthropic and educational organizations established upon their return such *klasni* schools for girls in their native towns (with one to five classes above

the elementary schooling; prototype of full secondary education) (Tcholakova, 1994; Daskalova, 1997)<sup>1</sup>.

The Bulgarian *class* school for girls established by Anastasia Tosheva in Eski Zagra (today Stara Zagora) in 1863 shows the interplay between nationalism, modernization and emancipation of women. Tosheva opened her *class* school only six months after the American Protestant missionaries – Theodore Byington and his wife Margaret, a Mount Holyoke college graduate, founded the mission's school in Eski Zagra. This missionary school aimed at educating girls, training Bulgarian women teachers, and inspiring them to support the missionaries' plan of religious and educational reforms. Byingtons' school in Eski Zagra was set up on the American Mount Holyoke model and envisioned reading, writing, arithmetic, grammar, geography, vocal music, needlework, and daily instruction in the Bible (Reeves-Ellington, 2004, pp. 152-153). Although this missionary school was a real success in educational terms, no students converted to Protestantism and thus the Byingtons made no progress in evangelizing the town. As Anastasia Tosheva wrote in her autobiography in a patriotic vein, the members of the local governing body, the *obshchina*, motivated her to open a Bulgarian school in Eski Zagra and teach there in order to «oppose the foes of Orthodoxy and our nation» (Tosheva, 1911). In her opening speech Tosheva insisted that if Bulgarians wanted progress and prosperity they had to educate their daughters. She was one of the first women radical supporters of the idea of women's education as a path to a successful future of the Bulgarian nation and her speech heralded the huge public debate on «the woman question» that developed in the following decades. During the school year 1868-1869, Tosheva's *class* school became the first Bulgarian women's school, where students completed a five-year course of study.

The teachers in the girls' *class* school in the towns of Gabrovo and Plovdiv followed Tosheva's example and opened five classes in their schools. These three schools actually gave the most advanced education for women in the Bulgarian lands prior to 1878. Most girls' *klasni* schools, however, offered only two, three or four years of education. Full secondary schools for women called *gimnazii* and modeled after German *Gymnasien* (in Bulgarian case with six classes above elementary education) were opened after 1878.

Nineteenth century Bulgarian educational developments were strongly influenced by Greek, Serbian, Russian, West European (mostly French), and American educational ideas and institutions. Perhaps the most important

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<sup>1</sup> Set up in the late 1850s by educated men and women: over 60 organizations with more than 6 000 members existed until 1878. They also opened women's reading clubs and libraries, organized public lectures and sent articles to periodicals, participated in the amateur theaters.

influence on the Bulgarian nineteenth century education until the 1840s was of Greek origin, not only in terms of the types of schools and programmes but also in the number of (men) teachers educated in Greek institutions of elementary and higher learning: Hellenic-Bulgarian schools in and outside the Bulgarian lands (Svishtov, Kotel, Sliven, Karlovo, Samokov, Shumen, Vidin, Smyrna) and in Greek theological schools in Athens and on the island of Halki, at the school Kurucheshme (Constantinople), at the school of Teophilus Kairis in Andros island, in secular high schools (*gimnazii*) in Athens and Bucharest, etc. Especially popular among Bulgarians were the ideas of the Greek poet and national revolutionary Rigas Velesinlis (1757-1798), who insisted that there should be schools for both boys and girls in every village. Education for girls, however, was established only after the foundation of Greek nation-state at the beginning of the nineteenth century. In 1834 the Greek government introduced compulsory primary education for both girls and boys aged five to twelve years. Although the Greek law of 1834 advocated separate education for girls and boys, it nevertheless did not ban mixed schools for elementary education. Yet in 1852 the Greek government forbade coeducation in primary schools. As far as secondary education is concerned, while investing energy and resources in the education of boys, the Greek state left girls' secondary education in private hands. Most popular and successful were the *Arsakeions* run by the «Society of Friends of Education» and named after the generous donor Apostolos Arsakis. *Arsakeions* were especially important for the preparation of women teachers. The first public secondary schools for girls, equivalent to those of boys, were opened in 1917 but only in 1929 secondary education for girls became comparable to that of boys thanks to the educational reform of the Cretan politician Eleutherios Venizelos (1864-1936) (Ziogou-Karasterghiou, 1986, p. 399).

The influence of the neighboring Serbia on Bulgarian education was also visible. The first Serbian ideas regarding women's emancipation came to the Bulgarian lands with the works of the well-known Serbian enlightener Dositej Obradović (1742-1811), who advocated co-education of boys and girls and saw the overcoming of «women's ignorance» and «barbarism» as an important step for Serbian advance. During the 1840s the first elementary schools for girls were opened in the capital Belgrade and subsequently in most territories of what would in the twentieth century become Yugoslavia. In 1863 the first state women's high school (*Visa zenska skola*) in the Balkans was established in the Serbian capital. Among the Bulgarian girls educated in the school were Zyumbula Talimova, Zhelka Ivanova and Smarayda Nacheva from Eski Zagora (today Stara Zagora). Bulgarian-Serbian educational cooperation was of short duration due to the escalation of both Serbian and Bulgarian nationalisms in the 1860s and 1870s.

Paradoxically, Bulgarian boys and girls who studied in Greek and Serbian schools became patriotically inspired there and transmitted the “national idea” to the Bulgarians. Although Serbia introduced compulsory primary education in 1882, the national census in the 1920s showed a high national illiteracy rate of 51,5% with considerable differences between the regions, ranging between 8,8% and 23,3% illiteracy rate in Slovenia and Vojvodina respectively, and 83,8% illiteracy rate in Macedonia. Serbian, Croat, and Slovenian women’s organizations insisted on improving women’s education as a major step to women’s emancipation and development of their young nations. However, women’s literacy rate even at the beginning of 1930s remained very limited - about 44% - again with huge differences among the Yugoslav regions. Thus in 1931, 94,2% of Slovenian women were literate while Macedonian women who could read and write made up only 18,3% of all Macedonian women. The Yugoslav government attempted to reduce illiteracy by opening new schools but the national illiteracy rate still remained high as late as 1940 (at slightly above 40%) (Stavrianos, 2000, pp. 448-466, 616-643).

## 2.2. *Discourses on women’s education*

The idea of women’s education asserted itself slowly and against the resistance of the traditional patriarchal values in the Bulgarian society under Ottoman domination. Teaching at schools was the only profession open to educated women in the Bulgarian lands at the time. The Bulgarian periodical press was born in the 1840s with the publication of the first newspaper *Bălgarski orel* (Bulgarian eagle) in Leipzig and the magazine *Lyuboslovie* (Philology) in Smyrna (today *İzmir*, Turkey), Asia Minor. The Bulgarian «print capitalism» (in the sense of Benedict Anderson) was favorable to the circulation of various kinds of emancipatory ideologies: nationalism, liberalism, feminisms, socialism, etc. A total of one hundred periodicals (newspapers and magazines) appeared in Bulgarian until 1878. Most of these periodicals, published in the émigré-colonies by Bulgarian intellectuals during 1860s and 1870s discussed «the woman’s question» and especially the necessity of women’s education: among them the newspapers *Makedoniya* (Macedonia) and *Pravo* (Law), the journals *Uchilishte* (School) and *Chitalishte* (Reading club), the only «women’s» magazine prior to Liberation called *Ruzhitsa ili red knizhki za zhenite* (Ruzhitsa or a series of booklets for women). However, they were all – including *Ruzhitsa* – edited by male journalists and intellectuals and most of them were based in Constantinople (*İstanbul*). American protestant missionaries published in the Ottoman capital two Protestant periodicals called *Zornitsa* (Dawn). The two Protestant *Zornitsas* (as they were widely known) spread American ideas about women’s education

and emancipation among Bulgarians. In the late 1870s they reached a combined circulation of thirty-nine hundred, which put them well ahead of the Bulgarian periodicals.

Similarly to their counterparts in other European countries (especially Jean-Jacques Rousseau) (Rousseau, 1983, pp. 43-49), Bulgarian male writers and national activists (Konstantin Fotinov, Petăr Beron, Alexandăr Exarh, Petko Slaveykov, to name but a few) supported – for different reasons – the idea of women’s education and argued that women should be educated: first – to become better housewives and mothers, useful, supportive, pleasant and entertaining companions for their husbands, and second – to breath patriotism into women, mobilize them for the national goals and better prepare them to raise their children, future citizens of the nation.

Clearly, some of these literary men favored the necessity for women’s education with traditionalist arguments: in order to serve individual men and «become a man’s good comrade» as Slaveykov put it. He also insisted that as «man, family and the whole nation depend on the instruction and the education of women» one should support women’s education even more than that of men (Daskalova, 2002, p. 23).

Parallel with the accelerating discourse on women’s education and progress, translations of (European – mostly French and Russian – but also American) normative and «moral» works appeared together with original texts by Bulgarian men of letters. Such texts propagated cultivation of reading habits and taste for «good» readings among «young girls». Lyuben Karavelov (1834-1879) – a Bulgarian national revolutionary and man of letters, was one of the few intellectuals in the Bulgarian and South East European context at the time who conceived of women’s education in terms of «natural rights» of «human beings». He was fiercely critical of different training for girls, which, he argued, did not develop their minds but killed their independence. Karavelov harshly attacked European (mainly the French) educational system that in contrast to the American, made women – as he put it – «trained slaves», «beautiful dolls», to be used by «old children» and «whiskered masters» (Daskalova, 2002, p. 24).

*Gendered discourses and their results.* Three main discourses on gender roles were spread in the region of Southeastern Europe, which are suggestive of the collective mentality and dominant ideas about women’s and men’s education in nineteenth century South Eastern Europe: *traditional traditionalist*, *neo-traditionalist* and *emancipatory*. The traditional traditionalist (or the old traditionalist/old patriarchalist) discourse – closely connected with Christianity – gained strength and visibility with the birth of the periodical press and modern Balkan literatures in the process of national formation (Fournaraki, 1992; Daskalova,



1998; Daskalova, 2008, pp. 185-195). In tune with the fashionable right-wing ideological currents after 1918, a new type of traditionalist/patriarchalist discourse became visible, which we will call – for the lack of better designation – neo-traditionalism. Its characteristics include (gender and ethnic) essentialism, anti-modernism and the extreme nationalism of the epoch.

Women's emancipatory discourse and women's movements in Central, Eastern and Southeastern Europe as elsewhere got their first impulses from education and social work and not surprisingly so, as the priority of education was among the essential characteristics of the classical women's movement (Bock, 2000). In the discussions of nationalism and modernization – arguments in favor of women's emancipation were developed; it is there that one finds the roots of women's self-consciousness in the Balkans. The emancipatory discourse spoke with arguments coming from liberal and socialist sources.

Men and women did not enjoy the same rights as citizens of the Balkan nation states. Nineteenth century educators from the region, like their Western counterparts believed in what Thomas Laqueur calls the «two-sex model», i.e. that women and men, as essentially distinct creatures, possess different bodies, which imply divergent behavior, completely different abilities and intellectual potential (Laqueur, 1990). Accordingly, they insisted on different education and socialization of women and men that would presumably correspond more properly to women's «natural» domestic and motherly duties and men's political and public orientation. Such opinions were reflected in the periodical press and schools' curricula in the Balkans.

Schools for girls, based on the idea of a specific «woman's nature», «woman's role» and «woman's vocation», perpetuated the belief in the necessity of specific education for women, different from that assigned to men: a good education for mothers was to be beneficial for their children and thus for the nation's future citizens. In tune with the patriarchal spirit of the time, the purpose of women's education was considered to be fundamentally different from that of men: while the latter was destined to produce «citizens», the former aimed at creating «mothers of the nation».

### *2.3 Teachers among the Bulgarian (Nineteenth Century) Revivalist intelligentsia (up to 1878)*

The data resulting from a large-scale sociological and historical research on the Bulgarian intelligentsia during the so-called period of National Revival (comprising roughly the nineteenth century, until the liberation from Ottoman domination) shows that the teachers were 4378 in total and from this number

women-teachers were about 400. Together with the clergy – 3623 persons for the whole period – the teachers formed the bulk of the Bulgarian intelligentsia at the time (Gentchev and Daskalova, 1988; Gentchev, 1990; Kouyumdjieva, 1996; Daskalova, 1997)<sup>2</sup>.

Among the Bulgarian teachers only men studied in Greek schools until the 1840s, when a major cultural reorientation took place in the Bulgarian society – first towards Russia, and somewhat later (after the Crimean war of 1853-1856) – also towards Western Europe<sup>3</sup>.

Greatest was the number of teachers (both female and male), who graduated in Russia – a consequence of deliberate Russian policies of giving grants to Southern Slavs in order to acquire cultural (and political) influence. The Russian graduates propagated new pedagogical ideas in Bulgaria and took part in the reform of the Bulgarian education, in the establishment of the already mentioned *klasni* schools and *gimnazii* (i.e. complete high schools), in the introduction of progressive pedagogical methods, etc. Next in importance came Serbia, especially in the sixties when it became a center for the Bulgarian revolutionary emigration.

The French secondary schools (Galata Sarai College in Constantinople) trained Bulgarian male teachers and so did some French Universities. Czech and French institutions had the same role in the preparation of future Bulgarian men-teachers and women-teachers in terms of their numbers. Some (male) Bulgarian would-be-teachers studied in the famous American Robert College in Constantinople and in the English College on the island Malta. A few Bulgarian men and women-teachers from the pre-1878 period studied in Romanian schools. Still smaller was the number of teachers educated in Austria-Hungary, in Croatia and Germany. Due to the religious (Islamic) character of their educational institutions at the time and the growing patriotic spirit against the Ottoman rule, no Bulgarian teachers studied in Ottoman primary and secondary schools. However, the greater part of the Bulgarian intelligentsia in the epoch of the National Revival could speak – and often write – in Turkish.

Of 1774 teachers, whose education is known, only 122 persons possessed university education and further 382 persons had secondary education, 370 persons were educated in the *klasni* schools (incomplete secondary education). The rest of the teachers possessed only primary education – in the elementary

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<sup>2</sup> The research was done between 1982 and 1988 at the Center for Theory and History of Culture of the St. Kliment Ohridski University of Sofia. All the numbers cited bellow come from its results. Several books appeared as an outcome of these huge collective efforts: by Krassimira Daskalova, Nikolai Gentchev, and Miglena Kuyumdjieva.

<sup>3</sup> After the Crimean War several Catholic and Protestant schools were established in the Ottoman Balkans, among them a school for boys in Plovdiv and the already-mentioned school for girls in Eski Zagra. Teachers in Eski Zagra's protestant school included several Americans.

*cell* schools or the *mutual* schools of mundane type. Teachers with unknown education can be considered with a great degree of certainty as low educated. Auto-didacticism played an important role throughout the nineteenth century. Even people with some kind of formal schooling were making further efforts to catch up with the newer achievements of the pedagogical science, to update their knowledge and improve their professional skills.

Of the teachers with complete secondary education only about one fifth graduated from Bulgarian schools – in the first Bulgarian *gimnazia* founded in Bolgrad, Bessabaria in 1859 (where a large Bulgarian émigré community existed) and the *gimnazii* in Plovdiv and Gabrovo, founded in the late 1860s. The others were graduates – as already mentioned – of various Russian, Greek, Serb, Czech, and West European secondary schools, and some studied in American and French Colleges or Lyceums, mostly in Constantinople. It should be noted that very often one and the same person changed several educational establishments during her/his studies.

122 men with (higher) university education worked as teachers even though they had graduated law, medicine, theology, etc. This was due to the lack of opportunities for such jobs in the Bulgarian lands under Ottoman domination. Such opportunities were available abroad and most of the Bulgarians with higher education actually worked and lived in other countries. Of the (male) teachers with university education 26 persons were graduates of departments of history and philology; next came those, who graduated theological academies and the theological departments in various universities – 19 persons; 18 of the teachers graduated medicine, 12 – law, 11 – physics or mathematics, 7 – philosophy, 4 – natural sciences, 4 – engineering, 1 – economics (Daskalova, 1997, pp. 226-227). (The type of the education of the others is unknown.) The above-cited figures reveal the prevalence of higher education in the humanities.

The education of women-teachers during the period of the national «Revival» was on average lower than that of men. Best educated among them were the graduates of secondary schools: 20 of them finished Russian schools, 6 – Serbian schools and 5 finished Czech schools; 77 women-teachers received education in Bulgarian *class* schools (Daskalova, 1997, p. 228).

There was a small group of foreigners – women and men – who taught not only in Bulgarian but also in missionary and private town schools before and after the Liberation in 1878: among them a couple of Serbian and Czech women who supported the then wide-spread idea of Slavic unity and progress.

*Professionalization of the work of Bulgarian teachers* is revealed by a number of indicators: to begin with, the setting up of arrangements for the teachers' work: written employment contracts, regulation of the working day and of

the school year, of important events such as school celebrations and holidays, the end-of-the year examination, etc. Then came teaching itself: introduction of new («progressive») teaching methods, of modern (mundane) subjects and curricula, provision with textbooks and various manuals and the prevalence of a new pedagogical «spirit» in general. There were, furthermore, issues of internal (school) organization and discipline: the emergence of school hierarchy with the positions of teacher-in-chief and school supervisor, increased number of rules and regulations of school life, the beginning of an organization on a regional and national scale, the setting up of professional (teachers') associations. The emergence of certain professional standards, e.g. requirements and expectations addressed to the teachers from within the professional «corps» and from the broader public, presented another sign of professionalization. A rudimentary professional and ethical «code» appeared during the nineteenth century, which started to shape an idealized image of (both male and female) teachers, and was indicative of the state of the Bulgarian society at that time.

*Teachers and the public space:* The teachers acquired an imminent public role during the epoch of the national revival with its twofold task of modernization and formation of a national «consciousness». In this context, to teach was not an occupation like the rest; in certain idealized and exalted notions it came to be perceived as a missionary activity – a «calling». Teaching was, according to these notions, an activity of «Enlightenment» (in Bulgarian *prosveta, probuda*) for the spread of «knowledge» among the uneducated. However, for the missionaries of the national revival Enlightenment meant primarily Enlightenment *to* a national consciousness, i.e. an activity to the purpose of arousing national pride and a sense of belonging to a nation-wide («imagined») community (Anderson, 1991). The formation of national consciousness was also entrusted to women, first as wives and housewives and then as mothers and educators of future citizens of the Bulgarian nation. In accordance with the patriotic function of education, the knowledge of the Bulgarian (written, literary) language and Bulgarian (medieval) history was of particular importance. Teaching could thus be perceived as a patriotic task of instilling in the children of love of the Fatherland. Teachers (together with the small number of writers and journalists) actually formed the new secular and patriotic Bulgarian intelligentsia. It is difficult to believe that the majority of the teachers lived up to these lofty missionary notions and national ideals. Still, judging from references in letters and memoirs and from certain idiomatic phrases and formulas, they seem to have been widely shared and to have constituted a dominant professional «ideology». Especially women teachers openly advocated women's advance through reading and education: Stanka Nikolitsa-Spaso-Elenina (1835-1920) translated (1853) into Bulgarian texts of the already mentioned Serbian advocate of women's education Dositej Obradović.

Rada Kirkovich (1848-1941) finished with a gold medal the well-known South Slav secondary school for girls – *Fundukleevska gimnazia* – in Kiev, Russia and translated geographical textbooks needed for the Bulgarian secondary schools. Lastly, one should mention women's activists such as Yordanka Filaretova (1843-1915) who was president of one of the most active Bulgarian women's societies in the 1870s-1890s and a strong supporter of women's education, development and public visibility.

### 3. The Second Period: Bulgarian Education 1878-1944

#### 3.1 *The historical context*

The Bulgarian nation-state (established in 1878) did not ensure the same rights and resources for its male and female citizens. It institutionalized gender difference based on gender hierarchy. The first Bulgarian (Tărnovo) Constitution of 1879 introduced universal schooling and obligatory elementary education for all Bulgarian citizens. Following the West European examples, the state accepted the principle of separation of the education of girls and boys. The primary school curricula copied some elements of the French, Belgian, Swedish, Russian, Austrian and German school systems but adapted them to the «sober Bulgarian tradition» (Chakurov, 1982, p. 35). Co-education was allowed only if girls were less than 11 and boys less than 12 years old. Although after 1878 the state opened several new middle and secondary schools for girls and boys and the number of girls, who went through elementary schooling rose, women were still less educated than men.

The figures for 1900 give a level of literacy of 29.81% (44.96% for men and 13.97% for women). In 1900 literacy in the towns stood at 54.04% while in the villages it was only 23.42% (67.34% of the urban men were literate and 38.94% of the rural men; the respective figures for women were 39.65% and 7.41%) (Daskalova, 1999, p. 64). The lag in rural education and especially in the education of peasant women is evident but in general it is characteristic of all traditional peasant societies. There were huge differences between Bulgarians and ethnic minorities, most illiterate being the Turkish and Gypsy minorities.

According to data cited by Holm Sundhaussen, in the beginning of the twentieth century literacy in Bulgaria was comparable to literacy in Serbia, Romania, the European part of Russia and Portugal, all of which had 75-80% illiterate populations. In contrast, illiteracy in the Scandinavian countries,

Switzerland, Germany, followed by the Netherlands, England, Wales, and Finland was reduced to 0-10% (Sundhausen, 1994). In number of teachers per 1,000 pupils of school age (between five and fifteen years old) Bulgaria, with 10 teachers per 1,000 pupils was nearer to the European standards than Serbia (3.2 per 1,000), Romania (about the same) and Greece (7.8 per 1,000). Still, there was a large lag in comparison to Switzerland, Sweden and Great Britain (Sundhausen, 1994, S. 25).

The literacy rate of both men and women increased steadily during the first five decades of the 20th C reaching 52.7% in 1920 (66.4% for men and 39.2% for women; 71.3% for the urban and 47.8% for the peasant population) and 75.6% in 1946 (83.9% for men and 67.3% for women; 85.5% for the urban and 72.3% for the peasant population) (Daskalov, 2005, p. 367). These data, however, tell us little about the character and quality of education.

### 3.2. *Aims and «spirit» of the education*

Apart from providing education in the narrow sense (as knowledge), the school system in the national state played a disciplinary role and had to form young certain qualities of character. Aims and more generally the «spirit» of education were formulated in brief in laws, and in more details – in school programs/curricula, in various normative documents of the ministry of education, in the writings of pedagogues and politicians, working on education, etc.

Bulgarian education during the modern period was formed under the sign of liberalism, universalism and humanism and was open towards the world and European culture in particular. At the same time, being national education aiming at the shaping of Bulgarian identity, it inculcated patriotism and moderate and tolerant nationalism (Daskalov, 2005, p. 391). Perhaps the most appropriate definition in this case is «liberal nationalism», i.e. creating «national and universal consciousness, patriotic and civic values». Until the Balkan wars and World War One, the Bulgarian political elites did not feel obliged to stress the national element, perhaps because it constituted a shared «cultural unconsciousness» while alternative ideologies – socialism, agrarianism – were still intellectual novelty and were not felt as a danger (Kaichev, 2003). The period of the wars was an exception in that nationalism was propagated by the state and after World War One this tendency went down. During the second half of the 1930s, however, education became an instrument for the implementation of authoritarian state ideology and monarchism, extreme nationalism, and right wing and some fascist ideas (Daskalov, 2005, p. 392).

### 3.3. Gendered education

Starting from the elementary school level up to the high schools (*gimnazii*), girls and boys had to study different subjects, which were believed to be «more suitable» for their «nature» and social roles. Secondary education after 1878 replicated the Napoleonic system favoring boys' secondary education and paying less attention to girls' educational needs. In tune with the «two-sex model» political men of the time supported differential policies as regards the education of women and men. Thus Bulgarian (male) educational authorities strengthened opinions of men as properly political and women as naturally domestic. Co-education was not allowed in the secondary schools though there were pedagogues who supported the idea of co-education and published in the early 1890s journals, which promoted such educational policy (such as *Pedagogium*, 1891-1894) (Chakurov, 1982, p. 11). The existing pedagogical periodicals propagated various educational ideas – from the classical texts of J. A. Komenski, John Locke, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi, Friedrich W. A. Fröbel, and Herbert Spencer via Herbart's pedagogy and anti-Herbartian criticisms to Ellen Key's new education texts.

### 3.4. Types of schools

Statistical data on Bulgarian secondary education was very complicated and difficult to compare until 1909, as there were various kinds of schools with a different number of «classes», called – as during the pre-1878 period – *klasni* schools. There were also incomplete and complete types of class schools, called *gimnazii* (as already mentioned, modeled after the German *Gymnasien*). The schools were both single-sex and co-educational. Most schools were called *narodni* (people's) schools and were supported by the Bulgarian state. There were also private schools not supported by the state, for example, for ethnic minorities and religious groups. In the 1885-1886 seven complete *gimnazii* for boys and two complete *gimnazii* for girls existed. But women's *gimnazii* had six classes (i.e. years) while men's had seven classes (i.e. years) and different curricula.

No wonder that some of the activists of the Bulgarian women's movement were very critical towards the level of girls' education. Thus Vela Blagoeva, the major socialist feminist, teacher, journalist and writer and wife of the founder of the Bulgarian social-democratic party Dimităr Blagoev, wrote at the beginning of the 1890s: «There is a big difference between the curricula of women's and men's *gimnazii*» and emphasized that the whole educational system and the teachers were responsible for the insufficient education Bulgarian girls received in the state institutions for secondary education. She also appealed to all educated women

to work energetically for the progress of women's education in the country (Blagoeva, 1893, pp. 74-75). Another emancipated woman – El. Vălcheva from Plovdiv – pointed to the unmotivated reaction of patriarchal men, who feared that if women received education equal to that of men, they would jeopardize the status-quo, change the gender balance and raise men's unemployment (Daskalova, 2012, pp. 143-144).

### 3.5. *Teachers after 1878*

Although the number of Bulgarian teachers between 1878 and 1944 increased several times in comparison with the previous period and reached 32 000 people in the early 1940s (Dimitrov, 1974)<sup>4</sup>, teachers were becoming increasingly powerless state employees in a large bureaucratic machine, subject to petty regulation and supervision and to arbitrary decisions from «above». They were deprived of the freedom to choose what to teach and how. There was a decrease in teachers' incomes and a general loss of prestige for the profession. In addition, salaries of village teachers were 10 percent lower than those of the urban teachers, and a trend toward «feminization» of the profession gradually set in, consistent with its subordinate status. Women-teachers received 10 percent less than their male colleagues (Chakurov, 1982, p. 11). An administrative decree in 1899 prohibited married women from teaching. While it was abrogated in 1904, rising unemployment in 1927 saw a law enacted for dismissing married women-teachers with twenty years of teaching experience and at the age of forty. Teaching no longer represented a «calling» but just a living. Despite the activity of the Bulgarian Teachers' Union, which emerged in 1895 to defend the professional and political rights of teachers as citizens, the teachers' public role deteriorated. The national ideas were displaced by socialist and other ideologies, or by indifference and de-politicization.

### 3.6. *Major educational laws and their outcomes.*

In 1891 the state started the process of centralization of the school system of both primary and secondary schools under the Ministry of education with the so-called *Zhivkov's law*. The government unified the curricula and the textbooks for the various types of schools. Zhivkov's law reconfirmed gender hierarchies in secondary education with boys' schools of seven classes above the primary level and girls' schools of six classes and a different curriculum. According to the law, obligatory schooling concerned only primary education for children between six

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<sup>4</sup> Comprising 41% of the Bulgarian intelligentsia at the time.



and twelve years of age. Once introduced, gender differences within the secondary education served as a convenient pretext to deprive girls of the benefits of the national University education. Following the passing of a new University law of 1895, several hundred Bulgarian women (most of them teachers) sent petitions to Parliament and applications to *Vissheto uchilishte* (Higher school) in Sofia established in 1888 and renamed University in 1904. They pleaded access for women as well. Women's petitions were neglected on the grounds that girls were not sufficiently prepared to enter the highest educational institution in Bulgaria; according to state officials, their high schools did not provide full secondary education. Women made a new collective appeal to the National Assembly for the equalization of high schools for girls with those for boys and for women's admission to the university. They sent an open letter to the daily newspapers in Sofia and provoked a public debate on women and university education. One particularly critical voice came from the Bulgarian feminist of Ukrainian origin Lidiya Shishmanova (1865-1937), married to Prof. Ivan Shishmanov, one of the best-known Bulgarian intellectuals. She argued that the conservative opinion was untenable and concluded that sooner or later Bulgarian women would be allowed to the University, like women in many other countries.

The women's campaign resulted in a *law of 1897* (introduced by the minister for education Konstantin Velichkov), which equalized secondary school education for girls and boys, fixing it at seven grades above the four-year primary level (Daskalova, 2012, pp. 144-147). This law was passed against the will of the conservative politicians and MPs, who insisted «not to hurry with this law equalizing the educational rights of women and men as the next step would be to secure her [i.e. «the woman», *K.D.*] equal social realization with the one man has» (Daskalova, 2012, p. 144). The parliamentarians also feared that with the equalization of education women would refuse to fulfill their «natural duties» and would aspire to state employment, which would raise the number of the «educated proletariat» in Bulgaria. Thanks to Minister Velichkov's liberal ideas and support, the law was voted. According to that law, girls' secondary schools now comprised a five-year lower section and a two-year upper section divided into two subsections, pedagogical and general. The aim of the former was to prepare women-teachers for the middle schools while the latter was meant for those girls who wanted to continue their education.

In 1900-1901 there were 165 *klasni* schools, incomplete and complete *gimnazii* altogether: 46 for boys, 36 for girls and 83 mixed. They had 30 380 students: 19 793 boys and 10 587 girls; only in the *gimnazii* (both complete and incomplete) there studied 3 750 boys and 2 663 girls. In the same year there were 16 complete *gimnazii*: 7 for girls (with 1765 students) and 9 for boys (with 2 927 students) – all of them with seven classes (i.e. years) (Daskalov, 2005, p. 355).

The *Law for Secondary and Girls' Education* of 1904 equalized the curricula of boys' and girls' *gimnazii*. It allowed for the opening of seven women's pedagogical schools equal to the already existing such pedagogical schools for men (in terms of number of years studied and curricula). As girls were considered most appropriate as teachers in kindergartens, a special course for training kindergarten teachers was opened in the girls' pedagogical school in Sofia in 1905. In 1912 the state also opened a Turkish pedagogical school with the special aim to prepare Muslim teachers for the elementary schools of the Turkish minority.

In 1908 *Mushanov's law* (named after Minister of Education, Nikola Mushanov) reconfirmed the obligatory character of primary schooling, which was extended to fourteen years of age (Daskalova, 2012, pp. 148-151). The law also permitted the co-education of girls and boys within the primary schools. It introduced a *new intermediate level of education* with the opening of the so-called *progimnazii*, i.e. an intermediate level bridging the elementary school level and the *gimnazii*. It replaced the previous *tri-klasni* schools as the lower section of the *gimnazii*. The *progimnazii* were free, but still not compulsory. They provided general education and avoided the early professional orientation of the students. Male and female teachers for *progimnazii* were prepared in special two-year higher pedagogical courses, which were set up in several boys' *gimnazii*. (The courses were of two types: such, which specialized in physics and mathematics, and others – in history and philology.) Mushanov's law included some discriminatory measures against women-teachers. Thus it envisioned that women-teachers receive 10% less salary than men-teachers and also – following the marriage bar, which existed in the «developed» countries in the West, that «married women should not be appointed as teachers» (Daskalova, 2012, p. 148).

The complete secondary school level consisted of schools for general education: *gimnazii* (real, classical and semi-classical, i.e. studying Latin only) as well as pedagogical and technical schools. The pedagogical schools combined general education with training, while technical schools prepared personnel for industry and agriculture. This law like the previous ones emphasized the primary role of general education, which suited best the necessities of the egalitarian Bulgarian society and gave the sons and daughters of the lower social strata in the countryside an opportunity to climb the social pyramid (Daskalov, 2005, p. 370).

According to law of 1908, each Bulgarian province could have only two *gimnazii*, one for girls and one for boys. While the greater part of the curriculum was the same, girls did not study Greek, descriptive geometry, art, and political economy. In their place were home economics, handwork, and music, subjects that were considered suitable for their «natural» predispositions (Daskalova, 2010, p. 159).

Compared with the 1890s, the first decade of the twentieth C saw an increase in the number of *progimnazii* and *gymnazii*. However, the number of girls who studied in the existing *gimnazii* was twice less than the number of boys. There was a steady tendency of raising the number of co-educational schools. But mixed/co-educational complete *gimnazii* didn't exist. The state statistics show that in 1910-1911 there existed 354 Bulgarian *klasni* schools, incomplete and complete *gimnazii*: 63 for boys, 51 for girls and 240 co-educational with 67 859 students altogether, among them 46 097 boys and 21 762 girls. In the same year, there were 18 complete men's *gimnazii* (with 8 371 students), 12 complete women's *gimnazii* (with 4 243 students) and 19 incomplete *gimnazii*: 6 for boys, 9 for girls and 4 mixed (co-educational) (Daskalov, 2005, p. 355).

#### Agrarian rule (1920-1923) and *Omarchevski law of 1921*

Bulgarian education headed in a new direction in 1921 with a law named after the Minister of Education, Stoyan Omarchevski. In the post-War economic and ideological crisis in tune with the understanding of the peasant leaders, the short-lived rule of the Agrarian party (1920-1923) attempted to redirect the state efforts from general to professional education. This was in line with what they believed to be the practical necessities of the Bulgarian economy and society. The supporters of professional education argued that general education prepared young people inappropriately and created an «intellectual proletariat», who looked for state employment only. Omarchevski law envisioned the opening of a series of special and professional schools connected with various handicrafts and industries. As this reform required solid general education, the law extended obligatory education – for both girls and boys – from four to seven years. Thus obligatory education lasted seven years and obligatory school age of the pupils was from 7 to 14 years. This remained as enduring legacy of the agrarian rule: *the progimnazii* became the (*obligatory*) *educational institution* that led to a rise of the level of education (Daskalov, 2005, p. 369).

The lower professional schools followed after the *progimnazii* with two more years of education. There appeared a new type of school - the so-called *realka* with six classes, i.e. four years elementary school education, three years of *progimnazia* and another three years after that (unlike the *gimnazia*, which had 5 years after the *progimnazia*). So, the *realka* was something between the *progimnazia* and full *gimnazia*. The number of *gimnazii* was reduced, but the number of *progimnazii* almost tripled between 1919 and 1927. The quantitative data showing the new trend are the following: there were 444 state *progimnazii* in 1919-1920; their number increased after Omarchevski law made *progimnazii* an obligatory level of education and reached 1288 *progimnazii* in 1926-1927 and 1932 *progimnazii* in 1938-1939 (with 7397 teachers). At the beginning the number of girls was only

¼ of the overall number of students but it reached about 1/3 in the late 1920s (Daskalov, 2005, p. 377).

The idea of Omarchevski's reform was that most of the peasant children would be able to receive secondary education cheaper, studying first in a *realka* and then – if they wished to get full secondary education – continue their education in the full *gimnazia*, in a pedagogical school or in another special educational institution. The idea for professional education was introduced at the higher level of education as well, with the opening of new special secondary schools in various fields, where girls and boy were admitted after finishing a *realka* (Daskalov, 2005, p. 376).

To sum up: the interwar period witnessed two opposite tendencies: of increasing the number of *gimnazii* but also the wish to reduce the elitist education (according to some politicians) in the *gimnazii*. But such attempts of the interwar governments to decrease the number of the *gimnazii* were not successful and the existing (complete) *gimnazii* managed to keep their positions and authority of most «progressive», «modern», and «European» educational institutions in the country. Another tendency - of gender inequalities – is attested by the smaller number of girls' *gimnazii* and the smaller number of girls who studied there. In 1920-1921 there were 87 complete and incomplete state *gimnazii*: 21 complete for boys; 16 complete and 2 incomplete for girls; 18 complete and 30 incomplete mixed. In the complete *gimnazii* there studied 30 119 students, among them 18 423 boys and 11 776 girls; in the incomplete – 7 654 boys and 4 800 girls. In 1938-1939 there were 132 complete and incomplete *gimnazii* (among them 112 state and 20 private) with 48 972 boy-students and 28 255 girl-students (Daskalov, 2005, p. 378).

### 3.7. Professional education and schools after 1878

The idea for opening professional schools belonged to the leaders of the Conservative party, whose members came mostly from the circles of merchants and landowners. As already mentioned, this topic provoked a public debate. Those in support of professional education accused those in favor of general education that they led young people away from productive labor and prepared them to look only for state employment thus creating «intellectual proletariat». From this point of view, the number of *gimnazii* looked unjustifiably high and educated people without employment were always unsatisfied and critically minded and such people were also politically dangerous. Supporters of general education insisted in their turn that the needs of the Bulgarian society with its small social differentiation, and underdeveloped industry and economy,

logically required general education that was also cheaper. Moreover, this type of education was more democratic as it allowed upward social mobility of poorer social groups. As the time passed, the professional education developed in various forms following the advance of the Bulgarian economy. While initially people with professional education, too, tried to find state employment and did not want to work according to their professional profile, gradually the economy started to need more people with professional education (Daskalov, 2005, pp. 369, 371).

Some professional schools, which were opened before Liberation continued their existence after 1878: however all of them were boys' schools. During the 1880s and 1890s several such schools operated: two state supported agricultural schools in Obratzov chiflik, near the town of Rousse and in Sadovo and the school for wine production in Pleven. Other boys' schools of this type included school for woodwork and iron/steel-work, a military school, a school for doctor's assistants; schools preparing specialists for the post, telegraph and railroads; schools for priests, etc. Among the professional schools one should mention the *Därzhavno risuvalno uchilishte* (state art school) and *Därzhavno muzikalno uchilishte* (state musical school) opened respectively in 1896 and 1904 in the capital Sofia. From the very beginning both were co-educational institutions (with some restrictions for women). The first state regulations regarding professional education (of 1894, 1897 and 1906) provided for the establishment of various kinds of mostly men's vocational schools. In 1907 a law regarding professional education was voted in Parliament, which concerned all types of professional schools, apart from the agricultural ones (Daskalov, 2005, pp. 371-372).

Professional education of girls was generally left to private initiatives and women's organizations. The women's society *Mayka* (Mother) in Sofia opened in 1893 the first girls' vocational school (three years of education) for dressmaking and cookery. The Red Cross opened a professional training school for nurses in Sofia in 1895 that continued to exist through the 1940s. The number of agricultural schools for girls grew from one in the late nineteenth century (compared with four for boys) to 13 in 1940 (compared with 12 for boys). One general trade school for girls and another one for boys were established in Sofia in 1926-1927. The boys' trade schools reached 6 in 1940 while girls' schools of this kind were only 2. In interwar, Bulgaria there existed 79 girls' practical schools for housekeeping and handicrafts, and 74 boys' handicrafts schools (Daskalov, 2005, p. 373; Daskalova, 2012, pp. 153-154).

State educational statistics differentiates between *spetsialni* (special) and (*stopanski*) professional schools. *Spetsialni* were, for example, pedagogical, military, medical (for nurses and midwives), police schools, etc. while (*stopanski*)

professional were trade schools, technical, industrial and agricultural schools (for forestry, agriculture, wine-making, etc.). In 1900-1901 there were 30 *spetsialni* (special) schools with 1811 pupils and 51 (*stopanski*) professional schools with 2325 pupils or 4136 pupils in total. In 1911-1912 school year the total number of pupils in the 28 *spetsialni* (special) schools and 106 (*stopanski*) professional schools was 7392 (Daskalov, 2005, p. 373).

### 3.8. *Private schools not supported by the Bulgarian state*

A number of private schools not supported by the Bulgarian state were also established. The first private commercial school for girls (later renamed commercial *gimnazia*) was opened in 1916 and existed until 1926-1927. Its creator, Ana Karima (1871-1949) was the first president of the Bulgarian Women's Union. According to the state statistics (which are not consistent in defining the gender profile of schools, students and teachers) most of the private schools (1634) were at elementary level but in 1919-1920 there existed also thirty-six *progimnazii* and eight *gimnazii*; in 1938-1939 the number of private *progimnazii*, *gimnazii* and special and professional schools was respectively 56, 20, and 73 (Daskalov, 2005, p. 377). Most numerous among them were the schools of the various minority groups (Turkish, Greek, Jewish, Armenian, Greek, etc.) and the missionary schools attended by children of Bulgarian citizens (Catholic and Protestant: 31 French, 22 German, 7 American, Italian, etc.). German education in Bulgaria expanded especially during the interwar period due to the widening economic, political and cultural contacts between the two countries and Bulgarian students in German schools were twice as numerous as those in French schools (Daskalov, 2005, p. 296).

### 3.9. *Co-education*

After the establishment of the Bulgarian nation-state in many towns and big villages due to the lack of financial resources, girls who wanted high school education were allowed to attend boys' schools. Especially after the turn of the twentieth century when the first Bulgarian women were admitted as regular students to Sofia University (1901) and after the new educational law introducing the intermediate *progimnazii* level was passed in 1908, Bulgarian educational authorities were a lot more open for co-education out of pedagogical reasons of consistency. They wanted to see mixed *progimnazii* and *gimnazii* as the co-educational principle was already a successful reality in the elementary schools and at the University. Especially for the *progimnazii* level, co-education was brought into existence out of the practical needs of various localities as it

involved better allocation of funds. It also gave opportunity for both boys and girls to attend the closest school in their neighborhood and not to travel for hours to reach the respective gender segregated schools. In order to sanction the already existing practice, the Bulgarian Ministry of education gave instructions in 1920 for all state *progimnazii* to be turned into co-educational institutions. The Ministry expressed the hope that as many of the mixed *progimnazii* could develop into incomplete or complete *gimnazii* this democratic change would gradually affect the whole Bulgarian education (Balabanov and Manev, 1943, pp. 223-234).

### 3.10. *The beginning of the university education in Bulgaria*

Although there were attempts at establishing a Bulgarian university in the capital of the Ottoman Empire Constantinople during the 1870s, the beginning of higher education in Bulgaria started in 1888-1889 with the opening of the *Vissh pedagogicheski kurs* (Higher pedagogical course) with teachers from the boys' *gimnazia* in Sofia and only one – Historical-Philological Department. The pedagogical Course was transformed into *Vissh uchilishte* (Superior school) in 1889-1890 with two new departments – Physics-Mathematics and Law. There was no academic autonomy and the professors were appointed and dismissed by the Ministry of Education. A new law from 1894 renamed the three Departments into Faculties/Schools and established administrative bodies, which included a Rector and Academic council, regular and extraordinary professors and associate professors, regular students and such for audit, etc. This structure started to turn step by step into university. The first Bulgarian university was conceived as a national university with the purpose to prepare a more homogenous intelligentsia, educated on national soil and in national patriotic spirit, and able of producing new and original ideas. Such nationalism was presented as counterweight to the cosmopolitan ideas brought home by the Bulgarian students educated in various foreign Universities. A new university law was voted in 1904, which renamed the *Vissheto uchilishte* into Sofia University and gave some academic autonomy. Meanwhile the first Bulgarian female students were admitted to Sofia University in 1901-1902. In 1902-1903 there were 40 professors and 578 students (among them 52 female students). In 1911-1912 Sofia University had 2380 students (among them 586 female students). After World War One, a Medical Faculty was added in 1918 to the three old Faculties (History and Philology; Physics and Mathematics; and Law) and in 1921 – other three Faculties/Schools were established: Agronomical, Veterinary and Theological (Daskalov, 2005, p. 379)<sup>5</sup>.

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<sup>5</sup> More on the history of women's University education, in Nazurska (2003).

### 3.11. *Other institutions for university education*

In the 1920s and 1930s other six educational institutions for higher education were established in the country: the Free University with commercial and financial-administrative departments (1924); the Higher Commercial School in Varna (1921-1922); the Higher Commercial School in Svishtov (1936-1937). The *Dărzhavnoto risuvalno uchiliste* (State School for Art) was restructured as Art Academy (1921-1922) and the *Dărzhavnoto musikalno uchilishte* (State School for Music) was made into State Musical Academy in 1922. The Royal Military School was also restructured and turned into Military Academy in 1924. The number of the students in all institutions of higher/University education in 1935-1936 was 9593 (plus 690 in the colleges). In 1938-1939 there were 9383 students (and other 819 in the colleges). The number of female students was four times less than the number of male students – a testimony to the existing educational inequality. However, the revolutionary expansion of higher education had to wait until state socialism after 1944 (Daskalov, 2005, pp. 380-381).

### 3.12. *Limits of citizenship: Bulgarian women between tradition and modernity*

Apart from educational inequalities, Bulgarian women still faced numerous other injustices in terms of professional, social and political rights. Especially those with education in law did not have the right to work as defense lawyers or judges until 1945, winning this right precisely when the rule of law became a mockery (Daskalova, 2017, pp. 198-216). Women's applications for jobs in the state administration were usually rejected on the grounds that there were enough male candidates for these positions. Sofia University statutes of the 1930s, for example, stated that women candidates for University teaching positions could apply only if there were no male candidates (Nazurska, 2003). As already mentioned, during years of crises, women were often ousted from positions and benefits already gained in order to allow room for men. To mention is also the long lasting political exclusion of Bulgarian female citizens: married, divorced and widowed women got the parliamentary vote only in 1938 (Daskalova, 2012a, pp. 273-288).

### 3.13. *The results*

Trying to evaluate the achievements of Bulgarian state modernization (1878-1944) in the realm of education one should mention that it made substantial progress, as far as advance towards general literacy and education (of both girls and boys) is concerned. This was due – among other factors – to the advancing integration of Bulgaria into the European cultural space and to the struggles of



women's activists and male supporters of women's emancipation, which started with securing opportunities for better education for girls. Last but not least, it was due to the activities and critiques voiced by women's activists and feminist organizations in the country (Daskalova, 1998).

### 3.14. *The education of girls and boys in Bulgaria after 1944*

As already mentioned, the first Bulgarian constitution of 1879 introduced *obligatory* and *free primary education* for all Bulgarian citizens, both women and men. During the agrarian regime, in 1921 *progimnazia* (with three classes above the elementary school) became *free* and *obligatory level of secondary education*.

After the communist party came to power in September 1944 gender equality became one of the major ideological mantra, which promoted educational activities in tune with the new «gender contract» of the patriarchal state and increased the level of literacy rate not only for men but for women as well. Parallel with this the educational system was turned into an instrument of communist propaganda against «capitalism» and for impementation of the «progressive ideas». Thus the new regime expected the school to serve the goal of «liquidation of the capitalist society» and of supporting the «construction of socialism» (Chakurov, 1982, p. 348).

According to the new (Dimitrov's) constitution of 1947, all schools became state schools and had to promote «democratic», «progressive» and secular spirit of education, serving the interests of the «working people» and their needs, and preparing builders of the socialist future of the Bulgarian people. The new educational *law of 1948* started to create unified educational system and designed several kinds of schools: general and professional; pre-school education (kindergartens), primary/elementary, secondary, and colleges and universities. As during the previous period one of the major issues of education under state socialism was the balance between general and politechnic education.

The Sovietisation of the Bulgarian educational system after 1944 and especially after 1948 had both positive and negative impact on the society at large. After 1957 the authorities tried to build more encompassing secondary education with almost full admission of girls and boys either in unified politechnical schools or in professional schools. One of major achievements of the socialist education in the country was the high literacy rate of the Bulgarian population, both women and men, urban and peasant population, of ethnic Bulgarians and (even) minorities. On the other hand, the dominant theory and ideology of communism was responsible for the one-sidedness and ideologization of the educational system in Bulgaria up to 1989.

#### 4. Conclusion

The overview presented above outlines the major developments in the Bulgarian education during the 19<sup>th</sup> and the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> centuries: first within the frame of the Ottoman Empire (and especially during the Tansimat reform period) and then within the Bulgarian nation-state after 1878 (up to 1944). While during the first period – in the lack of national state institutions – Bulgarians relied on self-organization and self-support and on the financial aid coming from rich Bulgarian and foreign individuals and institutions (such as the Russian Orthodox Church or the Russian state funds), after 1878 – the newly established nation-state started to introduce various laws and regulations aiming at creating an educational system in tune with the most progressive developments at the time. The article clearly shows the advancement of the Bulgarian education in terms of the number and diversity of the established educational institutions during the period into consideration, in terms of the achieved level of literacy and general education, in terms of inclusion of both boys and girls, both Bulgarians and national and religious minority groups. It also emphasizes the links between gender, national emancipation and modernization, the status of male and female teachers and gendered laws introduced by the Bulgarian nation-state after 1878.

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