The construction of ‘female citizens’: a socio-historical analysis of girls’ education in Luxembourg

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Background: This paper will empirically investigate female education in Luxembourg from a historical perspective. A special focus will be laid on the question of how women in Luxembourian society were constructed as female ‘citizens’, even though they were, rather, considered as a homogeneous category limited to a private sphere separated from the male citizens.

Purpose: The primary purpose of this article is to reveal the narrative of a homogenous femininity separated from a male sphere associated with citizenship, and the impact this division had on education. Secondly, through the example of Luxembourg, it will show how this narrative served to maintain traditional role allocations, while at the same time linking them to rhetorics of progress – for example, by adding a political dimension to the former ‘private sphere’. Thirdly, this article will demonstrate the heterogeneity which shaped female education, despite the rhetorical homogenization, showing how social and local/regional differences were as influential in determining female education as gender differences.

Design and methods: This historical study is based on a longitudinal analysis (contained within a bigger project) of the Luxembourgian curriculum in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The source corpus of this project includes 12,000 historical documents related to curricular negotiations in Luxembourg, which were analysed in a combined quantitative–qualitative analysis.

Findings: The analysis demonstrated that public and professional discussions about female education undertook a rhetorical homogenization of women and their education, and that this served to conserve existing gender differences in the school system. By strategies of rhetorical scientification and politicization of domestic tasks, traditional role allocations were ascribed a political dimension and interpreted as progressive. However, though claiming universality, the plurality of concepts proves that this homogenization did not reflect reality. The pedagogical concept of ‘the female education’ shows only a few rudimentary features, mainly based on the introduction of obligatory handcraft and domestic education. A social differentiation was already given by the structure of the school system, which – given that there were no secondary schools for girls – meant education in Catholic private schools in the first place.

Conclusions: The findings reveal that, by assuming a homogeneous concept of femininity, numerous codifications of female education – unlike those often perceived in literature and public discourse – were not necessarily understood as ‘modernizing’, but rather as conserving female role allocations. The results, however, suggest that female education was far more heterogeneous than rhetorically assumed in the educational debates, and that rather than gender differences, social and regional differences prevailed in determining schooling.

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Background
Following policy and curriculum emphasis, citizenship education has become one of the most burgeoning areas of educational research in recent years. Within this, the conceptualizations of ‘diversity’ and ‘pluralism’ sometimes appear to imply a previously existing concept of ‘homogenous’ citizenship education that is not historically evidenced. This perspective on citizenship education may result principally from the typical contemporary understanding of citizenship education as the education of the democratic citizen via specific school subjects, or within clearly defined extracurricular educational practices which are created with this specific aim in mind.

It is certainly the case that concepts of citizenship education have been remarkably limited in content for a long time. Through mainly essentialist theories of biological/psychological differences, women were systematically excluded from the education of ‘good citizens’ through using the criteria ‘female’ to construct a category of ‘woman’ separated from notions of the male citizen. In these theories, women were described as an inherent homogeneous category – despite their individual differences in social status and biographical experiences (Arnot 1997, 283).

The concept of the citizen hence fulfilled a triple function of distinction (Appelt 1999, 15): it dissociated the citizen from the authorities (upward distinction), from foreigners (outward distinction), and even from a private sphere that seemed to be dedicated to the women (inward distinction) – a setting that makes the citizen the ‘androcentric core of occidental political theory’ (13).

The public images around the turn of the twentieth century (as seen in Figure 1) show this perceived homogeneity of femininity as separate from what was considered ‘normal’ education, visually mostly represented by domestic education and handcraft – a stereotype that also shaped research on female education.

The education system also mirrors this distinction between the male (i.e. public) and female (i.e. private) spheres. Indeed, Luxembourg shared this narrative until 1968 by excluding explicit civic instruction in numerous schools for girls, while ascribing the function of social and moral education to domestic and religious subjects (cf. Schreiber 2012).

This perception helps to explain why issues of female citizenship education were largely neglected in international research. While Anglo-American research in the context of the feminist movement during the 1990s (Engendering democracy) drew increasing attention to gendered citizenry (Phillips 1991; Kelly 1993), most European research focused on issues of equal treatment and opportunities. Thus, gender differences in citizenship education were not perceived as central to research and the historiography of education was no exception to this.

Using the example of Luxembourg, an analysis of the public discourses in the nineteenth and twentieth century indicates that female education was nevertheless perceived as education for their societal rights, duties and responsibilities, and thus as civic education. Drawing on both recent historiography of education and a broad notion of citizenship education of nineteenth-century concepts (in Luxembourg, for instance, see ChD 1912, 45; Schreiber 2012, 6f.), this article therefore presumes a broader notion of citizenship education, interpreting the whole curriculum as being conducive to the construction of citizens. In this conception, every kind of schooling in all school subjects, and
towards every child implicitly and explicitly, contributes to the construction of nation-state citizenry. To what extent this citizenship education differs from school to school, class to class or between genders can be revealed by a curricular comparison.

However, the definition of citizenship education used in this article differs from both historical and contemporary concepts in one crucial point: it departs from a notion of the citizen linked to specific values, particularly indicating political beliefs and participation. Such abstraction is of special importance for the time before female suffrage enabled political participation for women. Hereafter, female education shall be analysed as a form of citizen construction using the hitherto unexplored empirical example of Luxembourg as a case study.

The article focuses on three aspects of curricular development:

- The strained relationship between the rhetorical homogenization of women and the inconsistency of the debates about the societal functions of women and their appropriate education.
- The implementation of such discursive concepts by reforms of female education.
- The resulting differences within female education.

These three fields shall serve as the basis to verify the thesis of the paper: that the education of girls – in the sense of the education of female citizens – had to follow the same cultural and social differentiations as the education of boys in Luxembourg, despite the fact that in discussions about the curriculum, girls’ education has always been designed as a homogenous category, based on female nature and in combination with the tasks of women in society. The thesis furthermore states that social and
regional differences carried much more weight in the design/organization of the curriculum than gender-specific ones. These differences are based on two curricular lines of conflict: on the one hand, there was the demand for further development in the education of girls from higher or middle-class families – orientating itself towards male education and therefore including, for example, the discussion on lessons in Latin and several scientific subjects; on the other hand, there was the demand for an education in practical things, above all through lessons on housekeeping. Overall, one has to distinguish between the education of girls with the purpose of preparing them for their later role in a household and in family life, and the education as training for a later occupation.

The first part of the paper addresses the structure of the girls’ school system and pays special attention to differences regarding access to the school system, maintaining bodies, and school profiles both between girls’ and boys’ schools and within female education. The second part investigates the debates over female role allocations in the Luxembourgian society and their effects on female education, followed by a contextualizing analysis of the curricular differences by comparing two phases of different degrees of institutionalization.

The structure of female education since the mid-nineteenth century

In nineteenth-century Luxembourg, school for most students meant six to seven years of primary school. Even before primary schooling was made mandatory in 1881, the number of children attending primary schools was relatively high – 20,698 in 1842, rising to 28,275 in 1881 (STATEC 1990, 201). Although an increasing number of students went to the Fortbildungsschule (continuing school) or the Oberprimärschule (upper primary school) – two kinds of post-primary schools requiring two more years – this in combination only adds up to 15–26% of all students who left primary school. Only 3% of students attended secondary school.

In the mid-nineteenth century, schooling largely took place on a co-educational basis, apparently attributable to the necessity of including girls into existent structures of schooling (see Figure 2). During the second half of the century, the developmental trend continuously shifted in support of gender-separated classes. From 1908 to the late 1960s, co-educational classes totalled about a third of all primary school classes. Although this trend was on the decrease after 1945, it was not until 1975 that mixed primary classes reached the percentage they held in 1842 (85%).

Considerably greater differences are apparent in the upper primary schools and continuing schools following primary school. The first upper primary school for boys opened its doors in Luxembourg in 1860; two years later, the first upper primary school for girls followed. Unlike the boys’ schools, upper primary schools for girls were denominationally (that is: Catholic) affiliated. Furthermore, unlike boys, girls were not affected by any codification of compulsory school attendance beyond primary schools (Mémorial du Grand-Duché de Luxembourg 1881, 369f.) until the School Law of 1912. Until the first decade of the twentieth century, significantly fewer upper primary classes and continuing classes existed for women (STATEC 1990, 201a; Figure 3). Things changed in the course of the Landwuôl policies (well-being of the countryside). Already in 1888 the journal Luxemburger Bauernfreund had demanded a better education of girls from peasant families in order to impart to them the ‘cultivation of the right religiosity, female needlework and the motherly education of the girls’ and a ‘solid formal education’ (solide Schulbildung) (Der Luxemburger Bauernfreund 1888, 50 f.). Special
demands were first and foremost the erection of domestic science schools (or housewifery schools and Sunday or evening schools) for girls who had completed their primary education. Such sewing and domestic science schools had existed in Luxembourg since 1850; in 11 towns there were additional agricultural residential schools for domestic sciences led by nuns, with the aim of facilitating school attendance for girls from rural
areas (Kellen 1930). At the beginning of the twentieth century, their education in primary schools was particularly promoted in upper primary schools, offering them an alternative to the attendance of the recently founded female secondary schools, which most rural families could not afford anyway. These means – such as the mobile agricultural school for domestic education (Carriers 1932), which visited every village for four to five months – were also intended to counteract the effects of the increasing rural depopulation brought about by the industrialization process. Nevertheless it can be observed that, although the number of girls attending the continuing schools was higher than the number of boys attending, it was considerably lower in the upper primary schools. This shows that (with regard to the secondary schools) the majority of women only claimed the minimum of further education for themselves after primary school.

In addition, other forms of extracurricular vocational training, for example in craft occupations, were closed off to girls for the most part. Moreover, continuing schools could serve as a kind of full-time school or professional training/vocational training for the girls, especially as access to secondary education was impossible for a large part of the female population, even after the establishment of the Lycée de jeunes filles (cf. Schreiber 2012).

Until 1968, secondary education for girls meant education in separate schools. Girls from more affluent urban families received their initial education at Catholic private schools and girls’ boarding schools in neighbouring countries, or else in ‘one of those Belgian or Rhenish monasteries, from which the young girls return with a middling varnish of Bildung’ (Weber-Brugmann 1912, 379). In a way, this functioned as an appropriate replacement for the ‘sophisticated’ education of boys from upper-class families: the main elements included religious instruction and a visit abroad, comparable to the one that men had during their higher education studies. The aim of this education was ironically commented on by Emma Weber-Brugmann: ‘And it is so very convenient to go with the great flow, that will so surely and naturally enter in the stagnant lake of snugly satisfied small-townersh’ (1912, 379). The private school Ste. Sophie, which was affiliated with the Congrégation Notre-Dame, was here of particular importance.

The first initiative to found a denominationally unaffiliated secondary school for girls was initiated by the aforementioned Verein für die Interessen der Frau (Association for Women’s Interests), whose declared aim – to raise the educational level of women – had initially been pursued via courses in aesthetics, literature, French and practical trainings in accountancy, nursing care and housekeeping/budget management. While arguing for the desperate situation of Protestant and Jewish girls who were not able to access any instruction beyond primary school (Götzinger 1997, 69f.), both the personal and topical directionality of the association show it to be rather an initiative for girls of the petite bourgeoisie, whilst Ste. Sophie until the 1930s remained considered as the school of the ‘upper and middle ten to twenty thousands’ (Das tote Viertel, Tageblatt, November 8 1931, 1). After the headmasters of the boys’ secondary schools had fiercely protested against a state-run foundation (Rapports de MM. les Directeurs, cited in AN-Lux IP 593), the new Lycée de jeunes filles was initially built up under private funding in 1909. This Lycée, followed by another one in Esch in 1910, was made up of an inferior grade (three years) and a superior grade, which again was divided into three sections: a commercial one with two additional years of study, and a modern languages and a Latin section, both including four more years of study (Lycée de jeunes filles Luxembourg 1912, 6–14). Although the new Lycée was intended to be an accommodative school offering a whole range of possible careers, attendance seemed most likely for children from more affluent urban families, as can be seen in the design of the three
sections. In particular, the applied arts were at the core of the curriculum, supplemented by commercial subjects, while the language sections were regarded as vocational training and supposed to prepare for further studies or the profession of a teacher (1912, 6–14). The rural population, on the contrary, was not meant to benefit from the new Lycée (Tockert 1924). This can predominantly be traced back to their distance to the towns of Esch and Luxembourg, as well as the long duration of school attendance (six years instead of two years at the upper primary school) (Petition der Einwohner der Stadt Esch 1910, ANLux IP 593.) Beyond that, statistics indicate that only a few female students initially finished with exams qualifying them for university entrance. Only six female students took the final exams in 1916, and it was not until 1934 that this number reached a double-digit (Lycée de jeunes filles Luxembourg 1959, 82). Though the numbers of male and female students receiving secondary education have converged during the second half of the twentieth century, they still reveal evident disparities regarding the number of examinees (Figure 4). The female examinees of the final only reached a number comparable to the male ones as recently as in the late 1970s (STATEC 1990, 203a).

The role of women in Luxembourg’s society

Both supporters and opponents of reforms of female education developed their arguments along two major themes:

1. The ‘nature of women’ (Zahn 1909, ANLux IP 593): This was used by opponents of reform as an argument for women not being suited to higher education, or rather, not requiring it because of their true duties. Supporters of further reforms, however, held women to be particularly suited to some educational goals, due to their sensibility or their aesthetic sense. This thinking about ‘natural’ differences between man and woman can also be found in discussions

![Graphical presentation](image)

Figure 4. Gender differences in school and exam attendance in secondary school.
Note: Graphical presentation by the author, based on data from STATEC (1990).
on whether girls can be taught by men: ‘courage, rectitude, strength, honesty in business etc. in boys can be developed better by a man just as girls can be taught kindness, tact, selflessness etc. best by a woman’ (Die Luxemburger Frau, 21 August 1920, 1).5

(2) The needs of both state and society: While the opponents of female secondary schools, for instance, were apprehensive of what was perceived as unhealthful gender rivalry for jobs, supporters of such a reform either expected women to gain better skills for household and familial education, or better conditions for working women. Both are combined in the Luxembourgian Schulbote of 1909, affirming the importance of citizenship education for women ‘(a) in cases they would have to shift for themselves, (b) in regard to their influence in the family, making women aware of the several tolls taken by the state for different reasons’ (Der Luxemburger Schulbote 1909, 450).6

Both areas – nature and societal functions of women – became inseparably linked by no later than the interwar period. Until the First World War, conceptualizing the role of women as housewives, and mothers as ‘a law of nature and a necessity of social life’7 was a dominant pattern (Conférence des professeurs d’Echternach 1909, ANLux IP 593). The Counsellor of the Government especially emphasized the clearly defined field of female responsibility: ‘In civilization, the woman has her part, not as citizen, but as companion of the man, as wife and especially as mother’8 (Rapport sur la question de l’éducation de la femme, January 10, 1910, ANLux IP 593.). Yet this statement still liberated the female duties in home and family from a purely private notion, ascribing to them political and social functions.

Things changed fundamentally with industrialization. In agricultural Luxembourg, women took an active part in farming; unmarried Luxembourgian women, due to the increasing urban orientation, either entered a primary teaching profession or earned their living as maid servants in Luxembourg City, Brussels or even Paris – an experience which, coincidently, has been described as an educational experience (Kmec 2010).

The transition to wage-dependent industrial work brought an increasing number of female workers. However, most professions remained closed to women, not only because a secondary education did not exist, but also because only few alternative non-school training situations were open to women. The same holds true for all appointments within civil and public services such as the mail service, to which women were only admitted after the end of the 1920s (Jones 1997, 226).

Around 1908, mass education associations (Volksbildungsvereine) were founded, whose influence on the perceptions of women and their role in society should not be underestimated. Within a short period of time, numerous women’s associations formed. The Verein für die Interessen der Frau, the most renowned association besides the Catholic Luxemburger Katholischen Frauenbund (Luxembourg Catholic Women’s League), played an important role as provider of the first private non-confessional secondary school for girls and organizer of public courses from 1909. Coincidentally, the Landwuôl movement began paying more attention to women in its combat against the Landflucht (rural depopulation). However, the activities of the Landwuôl movement served mainly to consolidate women’s domestic and needlework abilities, and the first publications for rural schools additionally supported this (e.g. Huss 1900).

Discussions crucially shifted with the First World War, when debates about the societal role of women became increasingly institutionalized both politically and in the media.
In 1919, the Luxemburger Wort published a special enclosure, the Luxemburger Frau. This was followed in 1927 by the Action féminine, the journal of the eponymous national women’s association, and then by Die Luxemburgerin in 1933. Propagating a traditional perception of women, the Luxemburger Frau was of special importance not only because it attracted the majority of female readers, but because it successfully managed to intertwine rhetorically the political and the private sphere. A specific female sense of self-sacrifice (Opfersinn) served as argument, which having at first been associated with familiar and household tasks, was subsequently projected to the political sphere (Besch 2009, 21).

The First World War changed the estimation of female education as a correcting measure needed to compensate a perceived common deficit of civic sentiment (Cravatte 1921, ANLux IP 2054), and which should be counteracted by specifically educating future mothers. The teachers and the ministry particularly stressed the importance of female patriotism and women’s housekeeping for the national economy (C.Z. 1939), thereby assigning ‘public’ functions to tasks that had so far been considered ‘female’ and ‘private’. However, the women’s journals and feminist associations used exactly the same strategies, successfully managing to combine the political and the private sphere rhetorically. Even the Luxemburger Frau ascribed to women a more developed affinity to their country:

Luxembourg’s women and girls probably experience the patriotic excitement of these days still more than the native male world. The whole depth of their mind resonates with it. They feel – as it were out of a motherly instinct – the value of patriotic allegiance. (Luxemburger Frau, April 23 1919)

Harnessing such national argumentation, the early feminist movement in particular supported its arguments for higher secondary education by reasoning about international educational differences instead of gender relations. They felt that Luxembourgian girls should not be condemned to ‘notorious inferiority to women of other nations’ (Luxemburger Zeitung, October 14, 1906).

Each of these perceptions of women held all-embracing aspirations, yet it is clear there were manifold perceptions – a multiplicity that first of all can be ascribed to societal and cultural differences within the Luxembourgian population and mirrored in the structural organization of female education. Seen from the structural analysis, two phases seem to be of special epistemological interest:

- The last two decades of the nineteenth century, when numerous new girls’ classes emerged without the syllabi being officially codified; and
- the institutionalization of female education between 1909 and 1916. Of special interest are the ways, in which the curricula were standardized and which particularities within female education and between female and male education were laid down by law.

Differentiated education without a compulsory syllabus

The curricular contents of female education are similarly varied. This is due to the fact that only few generally valid regulations of the curriculum took place in the field of female education in the nineteenth and early twentieth century. Here, primary schools exemplify the contradictory nature of female education in that education took place
co-educationally in some classes. However, a distinction between boys’ and girls’ education in one-class, two-form and three-form entry schools was made (Mémorial du Grand-Duché de Luxembourg 1914, 385ff.).

Moreover, the primary school syllabus of 1901 distinguishes between uptown (Oberstadt) and suburban boys’ and girls’ education (see Table 1), as can be seen in the example of the programme for the fifth grade.

As well as depicting differences in the curricular content for boys and girls, Table 1 also evidences societal differences, showing foremost in the disparities in French education and in history and geography lessons.

As would seem natural, private female education was least regulated, as best exemplified in the Catholic private school Ste. Sophie. Here, the curriculum, even after aligning to the public syllabus for girls’ secondary schools (1911), encompassed lessons in German, French and English language and literature, Greek authors, as well as maths education, history, physics, chemistry, natural sciences, cosmography and public law (Programme des Cours Ste. Sophie, ANLux IP 593). Moreover, specific lessons for societal education, such as heures de politesse (politeness lessons) and conversation lessons were taught and graded (Neyens 1987, 14f.).

However, the majority of girls only attended obligatory education, namely primary school and up to two more years in continuing schools and upper primary schools. Looking at their respective programs, girls’ classes seem to have copied their respective male counterparts.

Admittedly, the lessons in languages, natural sciences and above all in drawing were reduced to allow the inclusion of needlework and domestic education, which mediates the notion of a consistent concept of female education. Yet, the local variations between the upper primary school programs turned out to be more distinct than between the respective local boys’ and girls’ schools. Apparently, even adjacent girls’ schools (like the schools in the towns of Remich and Grevenmacher) mainly chose the local boys’ schools as the prevailing model. The content tables indicated in the programs were virtually congruent with their equivalent for boys, and for large parts even took over the exact wording (a notable exemption was maths education, which shows that women were not intended to be educated for public processes and transactions). Furthermore, issues like ‘state funds, shared and stocks’ (Staatspapiere, Aktien and Renten) or ‘saving

|                         | Uptown Boys | Uptown Girls | Suburbs Boys | Suburbs Girls |
|-------------------------|-------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| Catechism               | 2           | 2            | 2            | 2            |
| Bible                   | 2           | 2            | 2            | 2            |
| German                  | 6           | 6            | 6            | 5            |
| French                  | 10          | 8            | 5            | 4            |
| Arithmetic              | 6           | 6            | 3            | 3            |
| Geography               |             |              | 1            | 1            |
| History                 |             |              | 1            | 1            |
| Calligraphy             | 2           | 2            | 1            | 1            |
| Singing                 | 1           | 1            | 1            | 1            |
| Physical education      | 1           | 1            | 1            | 1            |
| Needlework              | 2           |              |              | 2            |

Source: Commune de Luxembourg 1901, 26f.
banks and insurance companies’ remained limited to boys’ education (School Programmes, ANLux IP 593).

Needlework exercises, by the same token, were used to distinguish the public upper primary school from the private ones. Unlike needlework in the Catholic private schools, it here was regarded as practical and useful:

In some schools the little farmer’s daughter is taught white stitch, filet knitting, net stitch and crocheting before she is able to knit a well formed simple sock. […] on the contrary, an aversion to such simple and ordinary work awakens. […] Soon, the little farmer’s daughter, educated by the embroidery frame, holds standing by the stove to be too ordinary and low. […] The old mother is forced to carry the weight of housekeeping on her weak shoulders and often has to stand by and watch her pampered little daughter […] squandering the mother’s fruits of sweat. (Der Luxemberger Schulbote 1863, 60f.)

Prescribed exercises here consist of simple knitting, darning and mending, as well as the sewing of simple clothes.

The institutionalization of female education

These differences were not withdrawn with the institutionalization of female education via codified syllabi and public schools, as can be seen by comparing the repartition of teaching lessons in upper primary schools to that of the new secondary school (Mémorial du Grand-Duché de Luxembourg 1916, 1097ff.). While time for needlework was gained at the expense of lessons in mathematics, natural sciences and drawing in upper primary schools, secondary schools mostly reduced language education for the same purpose.

The inferior grades of the Lycée show similar differences. Basically, women had the same division of lessons as the boys’ schools, i.e. fewer lessons were held in French and in physical education. Clear differences, however, show in language education. The differences can be explained by the declared aim to prepare the young girls for their future duties by practical-oriented instruction, which can be linked to the concern not to facilitate access to academic careers or ‘liberal’ professions for too many women. While

|                | Girls: Remich 1891 | Boys: Remich 1891 | Girls: Grevenmacher 1891 | Boys: Grevenmacher 1891 |
|----------------|-------------------|-------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------|
| Religion       | 2                 | 2                 | 3                         | 3                        |
| German         | 5                 | 6                 | 5                         | 4                        |
| French         | 6                 | 7                 | 6                         | 6                        |
| Arithmetic     | 5                 | 4                 | 4                         | 5                        |
| History/Geography | 2 (1 each)     | 3                 | 2 (1 each)                | 2                        |
| Sciences       | 1                 | 1                 | 1                         | 2                        |
| Accountancy    | 1                 | 1                 | 1                         | 1                        |
| Domestic education / Needlework | 4 | 0 | 5 | 0 |
| Drawing        | 1                 | 3                 | 1                         | 5                        |
| Calligraphy    | 1                 | 2                 | 1                         | 1                        |
| Singing        | 2                 | 1                 | 1                         | 1                        |
boys were taught seven hours of Latin in the inferior cycle, girls were initially only
taught four hours in English; it was only once girls were in the upper cycle of the Latin
section that they received lessons in ancient languages. What had been indicated previ-
ously in primary schools by the limitations of French lessons, here manifests itself in
their reduction and the substitution of English for Latin. The reduction of Latin lessons
was greatly excoriated by the instigators of the Lycée, and was perceived as a retrograde
step until Latin and the natural sciences started to be taught more extensively in the
run-up to communization in 1911 (Weber-Brugmann 1912, 382). In some ways, com-
munization brought about a certain convergence of the different schools’ programs. In
the end, the Lycée did not implement the specialization of the boys’ secondary schools.
While the curricula of the sections differ considerably in the late inferior and the com-
plete superior cycle, female secondary education remained fairly stable.

However, a comparison of the ancient language sections reveals only marginal dif-
fferences, as instruction was hardly modified for the modern language section, while the
commercial section was supplemented by further optional subjects. Furthermore, distinct
differences can be seen between the industrial and commercial sections for boys and the
commercial section for girls: German language is taught to a lesser extent, while maths
education is not even mentioned (only arithmetique commerciale is given as an optional
subject) and economic subjects are also missing – a clear indicator of the social and
artistic directionality of the female commercial section that is also apparent in optional
subjects like ‘First aid in case of emergencies, artificial drawing, modelling, manual dext-
erness education and needlework’ (Lycée de jeunes filles 1912, 9f., 27f.). A Luxembour-
gian particularity can be seen in the subject ‘Notions of physical, intellectual and moral
education’ (Notion d’éducation physique, intellectuelle et morale), which was meant to
prepare for family education and typical female professions in education.

Table 3. Distribution of teaching time (in hours per week) in upper primary schools and the
lycée.

| Secondary school, 3rd year | Girls | Boys, Latin-Greek section | Boys, Latin section | Boys, Commercial section |
|---------------------------|-------|--------------------------|--------------------|------------------------|
| Religious education       | 2     | 2                        | 2                  | 2                      |
| German                    | 4     | 3                        | 3                  | 5                      |
| French                    | 6     | 6                        | 6                  | 6                      |
| Latin                     | 0     | 7                        | 7                  | 0                      |
| Greek                     | 0     | 4                        | 0                  | 0                      |
| English                   | 4     | 0                        | 4                  | 3                      |
| Commercial arithmetic     | 0     | 0                        | 0                  | 3                      |
| Math                      | 2     | 2                        | 2                  | 4                      |
| Sciences                  | 1     | 1                        | 1                  | 0                      |
| Domestic education        | 1     | 0                        | 0                  | 0                      |
| Drawing                   | 2     | 2                        | 1                  | 4                      |
| History                   | 1     | 2                        | 2                  | 2                      |
| Geography                 | 1     | 1                        | 1                  | 1                      |
| Physics /chemistry        | 1     | 0                        | 0                  | 2                      |
| Law                       | 0     | 0                        | 0                  | 1                      |
| Accountancy               | 2     | 0                        | 0                  | 3                      |
| Stenography               | 0     | 0                        | 0                  | 2                      |
| Singing                   | 1     | 0                        | 0                  | 0                      |
| Physical education        | 1     | 2                        | 2                  | 0                      |
| Needlework                | 2     | 0                        | 0                  | 0                      |
Daughters of better situated urban families, who were not expected to share their education with rural or working-class children, were offered a new opportunity through these new female secondary schools. This is most apparent in the objectives of the Lycée de jeunes filles’ school programme, which clearly grouped students according to their social background. Subjects like educational theory, physiological chemistry, hygiene, social training (soziale Schulung) and an introduction to welfare institutions were rather intended for ‘young girls from higher and good middle-class families’, while the ‘young girl from the middle classes’ was expected to follow a practical path by studying needlework, domestic education and an ‘introduction into the female professions’. Additionally, the girls of the middle classes should primarily acquaint themselves with the rules of etiquette and bon ton. Yet, these were the only target groups mentioned in the programme of the new Lycée. Even though the feminist movement had promoted this school as opening new intellectual possibilities, the pronounced intention was to keep minderwertige Schülerinnen (schoolgirls of minor value) away from a scientific career (Lycée de jeunes filles 1912, 12). As such, the negotiations in the run-up to communization already show an elitist orientation with the intention to ‘not increase the proletariat’ (Heuert 1909, ANLux IP 593).

During this time, an alleged curricular homogenization was achieved by making domestic education obligatory in all school branches. Such subjects, seemingly aimed exclusively at the private sphere, bore societal and political dimensions as well. Domestic education was also considered to be ‘the most successful way to combat pauperism, immorality and alcoholism’ (Luxemburger Frau, March 24 1929). Even the preparation of the girls for familial education seemed to have a political dimension, since it appeared that a perceived adolescent deficit in civic sentiment would not be overcome by education in school (Cravatte 1921, ANLux IP 2054).

The Luxembourgian Ministry and the teachers ascribed a political dimension of national scope both to familial educational work and housekeeping tasks:

She [the girl] easily understands that her future educational work will be crucial for the whole country, but she also has to become aware of the benefits of her good housekeeping for the country, as the major part of the national wealth passes through the hands of the women, and she has to become a conscientious caretaker. (C.Z. 1939)

Since 1912, needlework and domestic education have been compulsory subjects for girls, at the expense of lessons in local studies (Heimatkunde), drawing and physical education. The curricular contents clearly display the aim of ‘educating the housewife’. Apart from knowledge in hygiene and nutrition, lessons in cleanliness and neatness were most notably scheduled (Arrêté du 25 mars 1914, Mémorial du Grand-Duché de Luxembourg 1914, 345f., 370). Other issues besides moral education for ‘domestic virtues’ were practical matters, such as ‘thriftiness and keeping a household account book’ (Arrêté du 25 mars 1914, Mémorial du Grand-Duché de Luxembourg 1914, 345f., 370). While domestic education had been provided at upper primary schools for girls ever since their creation, domestic education was then introduced in secondary education after communization – a move perceived as retrograde by the initiators of the Lycée:

In doing so, one was perhaps eager to safeguard the allegedly endangered femininity. Or maybe it was only due to the fact that there are so many bachelors seated in the Luxembourgian ministry, who imagine ‘theoretically learned dusting’ to be the most certain way to become a ‘good housewife’? (Weber-Brugmann 1912, 382)
Nevertheless, upper primary schools focussed more strongly on practical domestic education, not least by erecting school kitchens, gardens and sewing rooms. Beyond that, domestic education was intertwined with other subjects: in particular, lessons in drawing were (unlike the technical emphasis in boys’ education) entirely oriented towards the needs of needlework exercises (Mémorial du Grand-Duché de Luxembourg 1916, 1097, 1120). The same holds true for the natural sciences designed to support domestic education: the prescribed topics were related to hygiene and nurture, horticulture and dairy farming (Lycée de jeunes filles 1912, 23, 26f.; Der Luxemburger Schulbote 1912, 375ff.), while the Lycée also dealt with the chemical composition of food (Lycée de jeunes filles, 1912 23, 26f.).

Though the lack of a proper scientific education had been one of the major criticisms towards denominationally bound education (Reports of the commission d’instruction 1904, 1909, AnLux IP 593), and had been named one of the reasons for the foundation of the Lycée, it was still the case that mathematical and scientific topics were dealt with differently in female and male education in public schools, e.g. natural science in girls’ schools was clearly limited to ‘practical exercises of domestic economy: domicile and household utensils; alimentation; clothes and laundry; firing and light’; topics that also gained belated importance in the upper primary schools after 1939. As of the second gymnasial grade, topics like savings, banks, health and accident insurances were added, while ‘stocks, shares and bonds’ remained limited to boys’ education (Mémorial du Grand-Duché de Luxembourg 1916, 1111). Geometry, too, with its topics like ‘measuring and calculating living areas’, remained clearly limited to the domestic sphere. This differed greatly from the boys’ schools, where ‘leveling instruments, cubing of masonries’ formed part of the curriculum. Curricula for the natural sciences in secondary schools read similarly, as instruction in physics and chemistry was still dominated by topics like ‘Heating, combustible materials […] studies about [...] chemical materials to be found in everyday housework and in hygiene’ or even ‘practical exercises for bleaching’, revealing a striking scientification of domestic work (Huss 1900).

Educating female citizens: resumé and prospects

The above-mentioned analysis proves that Luxembourg was not exempt from the narrative model depicted at the start of this article. Although it appeared that topics of female education for societal and political functions would gain greater influence in public and professional discourse, Luxembourg’s conceptual debates nevertheless did not differentiate regarding perceptions of women and their role in society. Hence, it expressed the very same outlined homogenization of women separated from men.

Many statements from both official bodies and the feminist movement reveal the strategies with which women were assigned a ‘societal role’, while still inseparably linking these new societal functions to traditional role allocations. This was apparent, for instance: (1) by assigning ‘public’ functions to tasks that had been previously considered ‘female’ and ‘private’; (2) through strategies of ‘scientificating’ domesticity; and (3) by constructing female morality in a dichotomy to male politicality, and enforcing role allocations via focussing on ‘the concrete experience’ as dominant starting point in female education (in contrast to the paradigm of Bildung in male secondary education).

It was exactly the rhetorical homogenization of a special girls’ education that converged existing gender differences in the school system. The homogenizing portrayal of
female education fundamentally relied on traditional role allocations aimed at preserving the role of women as housewives and mothers. The structure of female education and the numerous codifications that sometimes reacted to private initiatives reveal that the foundations of specific girls’ schools – unlike those often perceived in literature and public discourse – were not necessarily understood as ‘modernizing’, but more as conserving female role allocations, namely via introducing domestic education or stating a specific moral dimension. Also, it shows that female education was (unlike boys’ education) not shaped by an ideal of preparing for specific professions.

It is not by coincidence that these measures concur with a politicization of the private sphere by women’s associations and journals. In fact, the political initiatives of the feminist movement repeat and reinforce the basic allocation schemes. Education is assigned the role of mediating female students’ acceptance of their future ‘selfless’ role in society. Compared to findings of neighbouring countries, this is not surprising. Both in Germany and in France, the institution of marriage as the real destiny of women was not openly questioned (Albisetti 2007; Clark 1984, 80). Instead, as in Luxembourg, the traditional role allocations were ascribed a political dimension and interpreted as progressive. The structure of female education mirrors the separation of male and female spheres, and goes beyond that by ranking masculinity beyond femininity in terms of access to education.

However, the plurality of concepts – though claiming universality – proves this homogenization did not reflect reality. The pedagogical concept of ‘the female education’ as a separate category did not exclude intersectional differentiation, although it does show a few rudimentary features, mainly based on the introduction of obligatory handcraft and domestic education. However, social and regional differences were still the prevailing concepts determining schooling, rather than gender differences. A social differentiation is already given by the structure of the school system, which given that there were no secondary schools for girls, meant education in Catholic private schools in the first instance. This remained persistent after the foundation of the Lycées de jeunes filles, which aimed at exclusiveness and were restricted to Luxembourg’s major cities.

Admittedly, there was a conjunctive element to the institutionalization of public female education and its compulsory syllabi, foremost the introduction of domestic education and handcraft/needlework in all branches of female education. Yet the term ‘domestic education’ neither describes the same content from a temporal perspective nor allows a social or regional comparison between schools, as can already be seen in the linguistic distinction between practical domestic education as taught in upper primary schools, and ‘theoretical domestic education’ in secondary schools. *De facto*, the range of domestic topics spans from the ‘education for the future agricultural house-wife’ to artistic handcraft in the Catholic private schools, and ‘education for charity’ of urban girls in the secondary schools to suppression of alcoholism, ‘health care’ and ‘practical cooking’ in the upper primary schools.

Similar unifying tendencies are shown in the reduction of the languages spoken by the elite, which meant scientific (Latin) and public service languages (French), and the reduction of science and math lessons. Yet it should be emphasized again that social and regional differences were the prevailing ones. As such, the curricular negotiations on female education in Luxembourg enforce a gender-separated and socially differentiated future citizen.
Notes
1. One reason for this increasing separation is revealed by the mid-nineteenth century primary school evaluation, for example, in Echternach. The commission attested to a remarkably high level of performance in the girls’ classes, but also criticised the poor performance of the boys. The commission recommended structural alterations and, in particular, a strict separation of boys and girls.
2. Since 1892, boys were obliged to attend a post-primary school for at least one more year after primary education.
3. ‘In einem dieser belgischen oder rheinländischen Klöster, die so billig sind, und von wo die jungen Mädchen mit einem ganz netten Firmis von Bildung wiederkommen’.
4. ‘Und es ist sehr bequem mit dem großen Strom zu schwimmen, der so sicher und selbstverständlich in den stagnierenden See behaglich zufriedenen Kleinstädtertums mündet’.
5. ‘Mut, Geradheit, Stärke, Ehrlichkeit im Geschäft usw. Kann besser in den Knaben durch den Mann entwickelt werden, wie Liebenswürdigkeit, Takt, Selbstlosigkeit usw. Den Mädchen am besten durch eine Frau beigebracht werden’.
6. ‘a) weil die Frau nicht selten auf sich selbst angewiesen ist, b) weil sie wegen ihres großen Einflusses in der Familie wissen soll, wofür und wie der Staat Opfer fordert’.
7. ‘… loi de nature et une nécessité de la vie sociale’.
8. ‘Dans la civilisation la femme y a sa part, non pas comme citoyenne, mais comme compagne de l’homme, comme épouse et notamment comme mère’.
9. ‘Die Luxemburger Frauen und Mädchen erleben in diesen Tagen die patriotische Begeisterung vielleicht noch tiefer als die einheimische Männerwelt. Bei der Frau schwingt […] die ganze Tiefe des Gemütes mit. Sie fühlen – wie aus einem mütterlichen Instinkt heraus – den Wert der vaterländischen Anhänglichkeit’.
10. This parallels international findings: According to Albisetti, the largest differences in the German feminist movement were between women from the middle classes and the women from the lower classes (Albisetti 2007, 190).
11. ‘In mancher Schule lernt das Bauerntöchterlein das Weißsticken, Filetstricken, Häkeln, ehe es im Stande ist, einen einfachen Strumpf in guter Form zu stricken, […] dagegen erwacht in ihm eine förmliche Abneigung gegen die einfachen und gemeinen Arbeiten […]. Das an der Stickrahme erzogene Bauerntöchterlein hält es bald für zu gemein und zu niedrig, am Herde zu stehen […] Die alte Mutter ist genötigt, die ganze Last der Haushaltung auf ihren schwachen Schultern zu tragen und muß es oft mitansehen, wie das verzärtelte Töchterlein […] die Früchte ihres Schweißes vertrümmert oder vergeudet’.
12. The comparison is based on all programmes of upper primary schools in 1890 (ANLux IP 1598).
13. The comparison of the secondary schools is based on all school programmes of the secondary schools in 1911.
14. ‘… junge Mädchen aus höhern oder gutbürgerlichen Kreisen’.
15. ‘… die erfolgreichste Bekämpfung des Pauperismus, der Unsittlieheit, des Alkoholismus’.
16. ‘Daß seine spätere Erziehungsarbeit für das Land entscheidend ist, leuchtet ihm leicht ein, es muß sich aber auch dessen bewußt werden, daß es durch eine gute Haushaltführung dem Lande nützen kann, daß der größte Teil des Volksvermögens durch Frauenhände geht, und es ein gewissenhafter Verwalter werden muss’.
17. ‘Vielleicht suchte man dadurch die angeblich gefährdete Weiblichkeit[…] zu retten. Oder ist vielleicht nur der Umstand schuld daran, daß am Luxemburger Ministertisch […] so viele Junggesellen sitzen, denen „theoretisch gelerntes Staubwischen“ […] als der sicherste Weg zur „guten Hausfrau“ vorschwebt?’
18. ‘… praktische Aufgaben aus der Hauswirtschaft: Wohnung und Hausgeräte; Nahrung, Kleidung und Wäsche; Feuerung und Licht’.
19. Such scientification strategies as the legitimation of traditional role allocations can also be found in other European countries, e.g. in Sweden.

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