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TRAINING AND PRACTICE IN HUNGARIAN TEACHER TRAINING INSTITUTES FROM 1945 TO 1959

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Abstract: Between 1950 and 1959, teacher training in secondary schools meant an education to last for four years followed by a specified final exam and a practice period of one year. Trainee teachers were subsequently expected to take a qualifying exam. The objectives of the research can be given as follows: analysis of the syllabuses regulating the training at secondary level and investigation of the procedures and means of the training. The objective of the investigation is to present and analyse the forms and the documents related to the regulation in training and practical training. In the course of the essay we will go into details concerning the difficulties and problems in organising practical training as well as the issue whether the vocational training allowed to contribute to develop trainee teachers' expertise. The use of primary sources such as curricula and regulations were included during the investigation. In the middle of the 20th century, the conscious and methodological development of trainee teachers' practical skills and abilities was considered as highly important by those preparing curricula, headmasters of teacher training schools and teachers of institutions and training schools.

Keywords: Hungary, history of education, teacher training institutes

Introduction

The objectives of the research can be given as follows: analysis of the syllabuses regulating the training at secondary level and investigation of the procedures and means of the training. The objective of the investigation is to present and analyse the forms and the documents related to the regulation in training and practical training. In the course of the essay we will go into details concerning the difficulties and problems in organising practical training as well as the issue whether the vocational training allowed to contribute to develop trainee teachers' expertise.

Practical Training

In the training of professionals, practical training is used in both wider and closer sense of the word. It is used in the wider sense in teacher training when, for instance, we generally speak about the theoretical knowledge being put into practice. When investigating the very side of the whole process of training teachers where trainees are taught the practical skills, abilities needed for their everyday profession as primary school teachers, in this case practical training is used in the closer sense of the word. The preparation for primary school teachers' profession as a career takes place in the course of practical training. One of the most important parts of practical training is to pass on the knowledge of how to teach as well as preparation for the practical issues to be arranged in connection with teaching. In the framework of practical training, the pedagogical techniques and methodological culture essential for professionals can be acquired by the trainees. Practical training is also quite a complex process taking into consideration the fact that it can solely be solved by possessing wide-ranging knowledge and applying the skills and abilities of using this knowledge practically. The professional preparation of would-be primary school teachers accomplishes itself in the process of practical training as a consequence of which their professional competence and expertise are developed.

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Methods

Hungarian training of teachers for primary schools possesses a rich specialized literature because institute teachers as well as college lecturers often wrote monographs of school history and research reports informing about the history of the training. When carrying out investigations in educational history, we should keep in view the problems that have come into existence in the course of exploring the history of the recent past. The investigation into the period after 1945 is influenced by the schematism of the anti-era fitting into the currently fashionable daily political slogans. That is why while presenting the realities of the period we have to explore the facts that are in connection with the history of the one and a half decades of the training for teachers of primary schools after the world war. Besides recognizing the facts mentioned in former publications (according to which training time was reduced to four years from 1949 and there was a withdrawal in training teachers of primary schools instead of developing it), it is necessary to point out that training teachers of primary schools could also show results between 1945 and 1959. The teachers and students of the training institutes were able to keep the values that have been forming and becoming richer for centuries and they were capable of bequeathing them for the next generation. It is by means of the professional values of the Hungarian training of primary school teachers that it has become a precious piece of Hungary's cultural values.

First of all, it was a research strategy of analytic character which seemed to be appropriate for the investigation in the course of which sources, documents were analysed.

The objectives of the research can be given as follows: analysis of the syllabuses regulating the training at secondary level and investigation of the procedures and means of the training. The objective of the investigation is to present and analyse the forms and the documents related to the regulation in training and practical training.

Results and Findings

The History of Training Primary School Teachers at Secondary Level from 1945 to 1959

'The aftermath of the consecutive alterations was that our teacher training system relapsed onto the 4-year intermediate level that developed in our country as early as 1881. This fact also proves that despite all kind of any 'good intentions', you cannot always refer to improvement, sometimes the fact of stagnation or regression must be stated also.' (Dráviczki, 2002, 29)

In 1944/45, the work of the Ministry of Public Education guiding education, the functioning of regional superintendence of schools, existence of denominational schools in the Hungarian school system all meant continuity. There was a continuity, too, in the training of teachers of primary schools. The dual structure of five years created in 1941 survived, in this system the students of the third year of a lycée could go on for higher education at the 4th then the 5th year of a training institute of primary school teachers.

In November 1947, two pedagogical colleges began to function in Budapest and Szeged where class teachers were trained for primary schools and so were trained specialized teachers for teaching certain groups of subjects at the senior section of primary school. Training time comprised 6 semesters at the college. In 1948 ecclesiastical schools were nationalized then the Minister stopped the training of primary school teachers at secondary level. Pedagogical colleges functioned on the grounds of their original objectives until 1949 then the training of primary school teachers was made a task of colleges.

A comprehensive form of secondary schools took place in Hungary in 1949. It settled the situation of educational institutes of secondary schools in the system of education as well as the relation between the aims of professional training and general education. A system of general and specialized secondary grammar schools was built up. Pedagogical secondary grammar school became a formation that lasted four years adapting itself to the system of secondary schools. From 1949, the training period 'was reduced to four years, respectively reaching the five years only with the practice year spent in an outer school – which five years meant only the minimum program even at the end of the last century and was effectively carried through in 1923.' (Kelemen, 1999: 57) In the system of the curricular aims of the teachers' training institutes, outstanding roles were given to elements, e.g. 'to spot profoundly the progressive pedagogical traditions and the top-ranking Soviet pedagogy' or 'to educate conscious socialist teachers who love their profession'. (Gombos, 2011, 71)

'In 1950 a decree with legal force created institutes of training primary school teachers. It was the task of the institutes training primary school teachers to offer theoretical and practical formation for educators who are suitably qualified for the junior section (1st to 4th classes) of primary school and who are generally educated capable of going on for higher studies. After attending the institutes of training primary school teachers, students sat for a final exam. After the final exam they were employed in schools as paid practising primary school

teachers for a year. At the end of the probationary year training was accomplished by sitting for a successful qualifying exam for primary school teachers.' (Molnár, 2013, 268).

In the 'intermediate teachers' training schools, preparation for the complex role of a primary-school teacher' was the task of the students being educated there. 'Improving the students' multi-sided personal development was implemented with an exceedingly lavish system of activities and – let us use a modern word – with vivid extracurricular programs, whilst keeping track of making the students acquire the necessary theoretical information.' (Vincze, 2014, 96)

Between 1945-1959, 'in the period being very much complex in itself and to be divided into some more periods, the primary-school teachers made efforts to insist on teaching writing-reading-counting, that is to meet in all circumstances their basic commitments towards the school pupils and parents. That is why, we may well say that in that period the most important specific feature from the point of view of the primary-school teachers was to be engaged in the observance of the nation.' (Mikonya, 2014, 43)

The Content of Education in Institutes Training Primary School Teachers

The determination of objectives of the syllabuses of the 1950s was normative mirroring ideological alignment which expected everyone to acquire marxist-leninist world-view. As far as genre is concerned, syllabuses belonged to a central, strongly prescriptive group. In syllabuses, direct ideological and political aims appeared besides pedagogical regulations. Documents functioned as means of the guidance, wish and will of the party and state.

Syllabuses made it possible to acquire the bases of general education but the overload of the students made it more difficult for the level of general education ensured at training institutes to reach the level of those studying at a secondary grammar school. Results similar to those of secondary grammar schools cannot be expected in the case of institutes of training primary school teachers seeing that these two types of institution have different training aims. Secondary grammar schools offered general education for their students, they prepared them for going on for higher education. It was the main aim of training primary school teachers to provide a professional training and, besides, not as a task of minor importance, it also offered general studies. Their institutes produced candidates of primary school teachers whose general knowledge was in harmony with the expectations of the period whereas it seemed to be less and less. In four years, institutes of training primary school teachers did their best to make their students feel the need for filling the accidental gaps in their education as adults and make them be able to educate and improve their minds on their own.

In comparison with the syllabuses of the five-year training of primary school teachers, the amount of lessons provided for subjects of pedagogy was reduced by 4 lessons, their conditions became worse from this point of view. It was a pedagogy given/taken over which the students at the institutes of training primary school teachers acquired from their coursebooks. This socialist pedagogy is normative as regards its system of values and aims; it is guided as regards the educational process being regulated; it is intellectualistic as regards the organization of effects. It expected the students to lead a constructive way of life.

Owing to the political situation, psychology had a hard role in training primary school teachers at secondary level between 1949 and 1953 as the subject of psychology was discontinued. After 1953 it, again, became a part of the subjects taught, the quantity and quality of general psychological knowledge became wider and deeper than in the previous years, the subject became suitable for basing pedagogical theory and practice again. Syllabuses, the content and quantity of subjects made it possible to acquire the bases of general education and craftsmanship at institutes of training primary school teachers of secondary level.

Regulation of Practical Training Based on Curricula

According to the curriculum issued in 1951, 9 lessons weekly were devoted to practical education (Table No. 1). In year 3, practice was taught 3 lessons a week, in year 4 it amounted to 6 lessons a week. School practice made up 6.7% of the lessons. This subject related to practical issues was called 'Teaching practice' in the curriculum. Trainee teachers of the third year observed classes and carried out practical teaching in the first and second years of primary schools 3 lessons a week. In year four, trainee teachers observed lessons in the third and fourth year of training schools, in the first year of other primary schools, in classes or schools of remedial teaching, kindergartens, schools with divided or partly divided education, and besides they also taught 6 lessons a week.

Table 1. Lesson plan of teacher training schools, 1951

Subjects	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Total of weekly lessons
Hungarian Language and Literature	6	5	4	4	19
History and Constitutional Studies	2	3	3	4	12
Pedagogy					18
Theory of Teaching		3			
Theory of Education			2	2/0	
Methodology			2		
History of Education				0/2	
Practical Teaching			3	6	9
Russian Language and Literature	2	2	2	2	8
Mathematics	5	4	3	3	15
Physics			3	3	6
Natural History					10
Botany	3				
Zoology		3			
Human Organism			2		
Health Education				2	
Chemistry		3			3
Geography	3	2	2		7
Physical Education	2	2	2	2	8
Singing	3	3	3	3	12
Music	2	2	2	2	8
Drawing	2	2	2	2	8
Total:	30	34	35	35	134

Source. Curriculum for teacher training schools, 1951.

‘The proportions and the amount of lessons provided for practical training did not change, they kept on having their conditions in syllabuses all the time. A new form of practical training was introduced from 1950: a probationary year. During this probationary year candidates could practise for a long time, in the meantime their work was helped with. It could have had a real value if candidates had not been left alone during their practice, they should have been in daily connection with their training institutes. Probationary year can be considered as an organic part of training primary school teachers, it functioned as a connected, individual, complex professional practice. In a hidden form it reduced the shortage of primary school teachers. In its realized form its professional value was small.’ (Molnár 2012, 176)

‘The document entitled ‘Regulation of Teacher Trainees’ Probationary Year’ was published in 1951. It contained rules concerning the teacher trainees’ work and it also appointed those responsible for organising and checking the practice. (Tanítójelöltek, 1951)

Organising the practice:

Assigning teacher trainees in terms of counties was carried out by the primary school department of the Ministry. Within the counties, it was the educational department of the county council which elaborated the detailed scheme.

The teacher trainees’ work:

In the first term, trainees either had to study or do classroom observation while in the second term everybody had to teach. In the majority of cases, those ‘practising’ were to teach throughout the academic year.

Directing and checking the practice:

The trainees’ work was checked and evaluated by the following persons: director of studies (deputy headmaster). Headmaster of the primary school, superintendent of studies, leader of the county, municipal, resp. district educational department, director of the teachers’ training college.

Financial provision of the practising teacher trainees:

Those carrying out teaching as teacher trainees were entitled to have some fee in addition to other bonuses (e.g. a bounty of 50% in case of schools for children living on detached farms).

The qualifying exam:

The qualifying exam was to be taken after the end of the probationary year. The parts of the qualifying exams were as follows:

- 1./ written part (pedagogy, teaching practice)
- 2./ oral part (teaching, methodology, theory of school organisation)
- 3./ practical exam (teaching practice, teaching for 20 or 40 minutes).’ (Molnár, Járay, 2014, 101-102)

‘When assessing the probationary year, we have to mention as a positive feature that trainees could practise in the teaching process for a long time, in the meantime their work was supported. It could have had a real value if teacher trainees had not been left alone for this academic year, they should have been in daily contact with the training institute. In the course of the probationary year, the theoretical knowledge of the trainees may also have decreased that is why it would have been more expedient to organise the written and the oral part of the qualifying exam simultaneously with the final exam. Probationary year can be considered as the part of teachers’ training, it functioned as an uninterrupted individual complex practice of profession. In implicit form, it also reduced the lack of primary school teachers. In the form it was realised it only had an insignificant professional value.’ (Molnár, Járay, 2014, 106)

Process of Practical Training

The thoroughly elaborated practical training, which was carried out systematically, played an important part in preparing trainees, acquiring teaching profession, developing and promoting different pedagogical skills.

Besides teacher training schools, practising schools were also essential; trainees as well as pupils of junior section of primary schools needed for the preparation of trainees were mostly placed in the building of teacher training schools. The order of establishing and operating practising schools evolved, based on great traditions and elaborated practice, which were carefully regulated from the very beginning.

It was mainly practising schools which ensured the unity of theory and practice. It worked as a kind of workshop: it made the trainees become familiar with the pedagogical-psychological principles, strategies, methods established respectively required by the teacher of the training school according to the requirements towards primary school teachers at practising schools. Trainees were introduced to these principles, strategies and methods and they could also practice them in the framework of different classes held for pupils.

In training schools, subject teachers, teachers of Methodology and primary school teachers at practising schools all worked together in unity and agreement and it was the main endeavour of all of them to involve trainees in educating and teaching children.

In the course of all this, they tried to make their trainees get used to self-reliance and independence. Trainee teachers took part in practical training and taught at practising schools from their first year onwards, from the very beginning. First they observed classes in groups, later individually.

In the course of visiting classes in groups, trainees also had the possibility of observing demonstration lessons also known as ‘sample teachings’ held for them on a regular basis. These teachings had been carefully planned by the teachers of the training schools such as the subject teachers, teachers of pedagogy, psychology or methodology as well as the teacher leading practice teaching and the primary school teacher of the practising school. Trainees had received a detailed handout about these sessions on the grounds of which they could observe the lesson – by taking observation points into consideration – afterwards they participated in a detailed, thorough discussion about the lessons.

The threefold unity of preparation for the lesson, practical teaching and evaluation remained unchanged all through the practical training, however – by obeying the principle of graduality – first trainees were rather observers afterwards they participated in planning, execution and evaluation more and more independently and to greater extent.

First they observed demonstration lessons in some subject then they also prepared their own detailed plan for a given lesson. First they held a so-called trial teaching before their co-trainees and it was only after this that they were allowed to hold a lesson or a part of a lesson in a chosen class of the practising school.

The primary school teacher, the subject teachers and the teacher of methodology all participated in the lesson. In the course of the preparation – irrespective of the fact whether it was the preparation of a demonstration lesson or a lesson to be held by the trainee – the objective and material of the teaching, the main didactic tasks and their order all had to be clarified in details, i.e. they had to be presented, the necessary and possible methods and tools had to be planned, etc. First preparation lessons were mainly prepared by the primary school teachers and the

teachers of the practising school, later on they ended up in only confining themselves to telling the most necessary pieces of information related to objectives and materials thus the whole process of elaborating was left to the trainees. The principle of gradual and orderly progress prevailed in both the measure and details of the elaboration. Those preparing the plan initially had to strive after completeness: they had to write the whole imagined content of the planned lesson, its course, and besides the primary school teacher's text and questions also the pupils' possible reactions and answers. The precisely revised plan was several pages, corrected by the mentors and they told or wrote the trainees their advice. In the process of practising, the detailed plan was followed by ample drafts, later on by shorter lesson plans.

Initially, practical teaching was almost considered as a high day in trainees' life but as time passed by it also meant an important event. It was preceded by thorough preparation and it was followed by detailed attention. In the lesson of assessment, first the trainee's self-assessment took place followed by the critical remarks made by other trainees, the primary school teacher, the teacher of methodology and finally by the group leader (in most cases a teacher of pedagogy or psychology). The conclusion of the practical teaching was drawn and established, pro and con features were made aware of, shortcomings and problems were analysed and corrected with potential solutions, pieces of advice in order to make them avoidable later on.

Becoming proficient involved that the time for joint preparation was shortened whereas the lesson of assessment was turning into a professional forum, a framework of often deep, meaningful and passionate discussions by means of multi-faceted preparation, ever widening strategic knowledge and the development of pedagogic culture. Besides knowledge, plenty of pedagogical techniques, procedures, skills, abilities could thus be developed in the course of practical training. Continuous preparations, practical teachings and assessments kept on increasing the trainees' pedagogical preparedness and consciousness and their expertise applied in both theory and practice.

Trainees could see demonstration lessons in every subject, as well as they had the opportunity to hold lessons in every subject themselves, so they succeeded in completing the teacher training school by acquiring enough self-supporting experience to work independently.

In teacher training schools, the consistent pedagogical preparedness, opinion, procedure and effect of the teachers' staff have always been considered important in order to establish and develop primary school teachers' profession. Teachers paid a lot of attention to get to know their pupils. In order to do so, they often visited each other's lessons and spent as much time as possible with their pupils. During staff meetings, they regularly dealt with the academic progress and human development of the pupils as well.

Psychology, pedagogy (most emphatically, didactics) and methodology are in the centre of the theoretical preparation. Nevertheless, teachers of general subjects uniformly acknowledged that every subject had a training purpose. It meant that for teachers the final purpose was not aimed at the acquisition of their own subject but they were all meant to be tool for the trainees' becoming a primary school teachers. These lessons provided some kind of example as well. According to the nature of the special subjects, teachers were obliged to instruct their trainees how to teach economically in order that they would also be able to pass it on. At the same time, they also have to strive after developing different skills and the whole personality of trainees. Teacher training schools were considered to be institutions of correction at the same time. In order to achieve this, besides thorough preparation, the proper way of behaviour to be expected in life was also required. The development of the trainees' presentation, drafting and speaking skills were dealt with alongside their preparation to be able to perform in front of wider audience, forming and developing other skills and ways of behaviour necessary in social and public life.

In the history of the training it was a continuously returning requirement to realise the principle related to the unity of theory and practice. It is also expressed in the expectation that practising schools should harmonise with the pedagogical – or generally speaking with the theoretical – training to take place in training schools in every respect.

Conclusion

Standardisation of Practical Training

In 1950, the way of practical training for primary school teachers was surveyed. In 1951, the regulation of practical training was issued – its aim was putting an end to differences between institutions thus it introduced uniform notions. Instead of 'observing lessons', the term 'visit' was used, 'demonstration teaching' replaced 'sample teaching'. Likewise, 'main assessor' became 'deputy primary school teacher' and 'assessment' turned into 'discussion'. These new expressions mean a change in approach and suggest an aiding and analysing

attitude – although this approach also appeared in the practice of the previous years – assessments became more of a supporting intention.

Compared with the curriculum of 1951, the regulation significantly transformed the form and order of practical training. It starts practical training in as early as the first year. From the second term onwards, the visits in groups, introduced in the first two years, were completed by individual visits. Third- and fourth-year trainees observed lessons, attended practical teachings, carried out visits in groups. They visited schools in homesteads and other teacher training schools. In the course of visits, the trainees prepared ahead and demonstrated practical teaching to their classmates besides observation and collecting experience.

By parallelising practising schools, unfortunately training took place in smaller groups as a result of putting an end to senior classes. In the early 1950s, merged classes were organised in practising schools. In practising schools, trainees were able to familiarise themselves with the way education could be organised in schools which were not merged.

The proportions and the amount of lessons provided for practical training did not change, they kept on having their conditions in syllabuses all the time. A new form of practical training was introduced from 1950: a probationary year. The traditions of training primary school teachers at secondary level were working between 1945 and 1959. Among them we can find the practical acquisition of pedagogical techniques, the formation and the development of the sense of vocation of the would-be primary school teachers.

During the history of training primary school teachers between 1945 and 1959, the structure of training (5, 4 years, college), its content (syllabus, teaching material), the perspective of its development were determined by political power interests. In 1949 the formation cycle of training primary school teachers was reduced while re-organizing secondary schools. The qualification of primary school teachers was only limited to teaching in the 1st to the 4th classes, primary school teachers' competence line was drawn at the age of ten years. Professional values, with the exception of the feature of being centred on children, kept on working guaranteeing the successfulness of training.

The content and the amount of the subjects of the training at secondary level made it possible to acquire general education and craftsmanship.

The traditions of training primary school teachers at secondary level were working between 1945 and 1959. Among them we can find the practical acquisition of pedagogical techniques, the formation and the development of the sense of vocation of the would-be primary school teachers.

Recommendations

The results of the thesis can be employed at the institutes training primary school teachers during the education concerning educational history, they can contribute to superseding the anti-period approach linked with the era.

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