

BEST PRACTICE? THE WORK OF THE TEACHER TRAINING INSTITUTE OF THE UNIVERSITY OF DEBRECEN, 1924-1949

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There are several aspects of the national and international researches dealing with the history of higher education that would be worth considering as a basic research. The institutions, acts and regulations, the development of science, the changes in education history could be seen as the centers of the researches known to us that are based on historical documents. Our actual research project is constructed from several components, however, in the first place, it makes an attempt to reveal the effects and regional radiation of disciplinary and training centers, as well as the relation and synergy in educator training. Numerous studies, local publication and portrays were made about the educator training institutions and actors in the North Eastern region of Hungary, however, there are no overall analyses about the local and profession-immanent incentives of the expansion. The region that is very often called semi-peripheral in the special literature has features that make it worth researching from a social and education historical point of view. The parallel existence and silent competition of the state and several church maintainers can be mentioned as one, as well as the complexity of the settlement structure and the colorful collective of autonomies. Their influence in education, in the period under examination could be traced, although with changing intensity. Besides all these, the influence of the university in Debrecen on the training of educators and their trainers, as well as on the development of the pedagogical, academic environment and intellectuality could hardly be questioned. We want to examine how the values (represented by the educational sciences) were realized among the colleagues of the teacher training intellectual center and the students, how they adopted and formed the approach, research and education principles? How did the pedagogical contents transmitted in teacher training reflect the commissions of maintainers and the special orientation of academic centers (professional radiation, idea expansion)? And finally: what kind of a personal and professional co-operational network could be detected among the teacher body of the training places (examination of synergies)?

Keywords: history of education, higher education,
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According to the inaugural addresses of the rectors or the speech held by the deans of the university (University of Debrecen) on the opening and closing ceremonies the university as an institution have four main functions. Or more exactly the phenomenon of the university means the aggregation these functions.

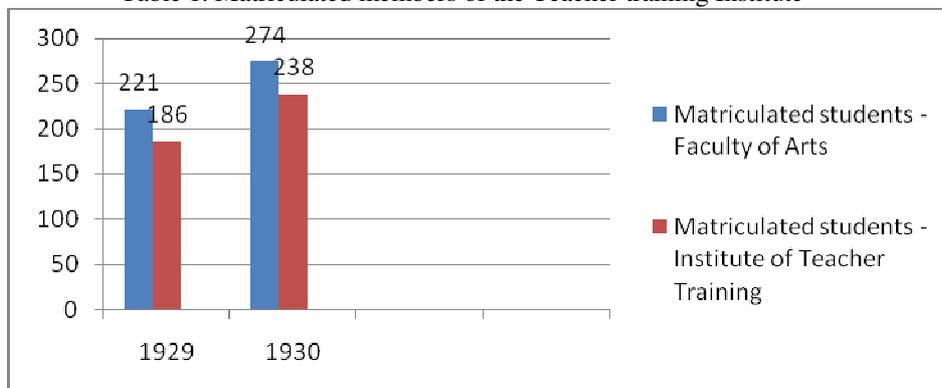
The four functions are the following: First and foremost, commitment to the issue of the scientific research. The university is the place of the serious and consistent research. Members of the community of the university have to be engaged in activities related to the deeper understanding the world, the university, the human community or creation of God. Secondly, the university is a place for the training of the next generations of scholars. By carrying the first function, students (as members of the researcher community of the university) are learning systematically, and finally they understand: what does it mean to be a scientist. The third function is the specialized training. The university prepares the students not only for the scientific research but for the ‘civil’ career too. University provides qualifications that help the allocation, the finding of a profession. In addition, the last function is the education – students must become responsible and reliable leaders of the community.

While the first, the second and the fourth functions were the responsibility of the university as a whole (the responsibility of every professor), the third function was the mission of the specialized institutions. And that is why, according to the structure of the university, at the Faculty of Medicine was organized the Physician Training Institute, at the Faculty of Law was organized the Legal Training Institute, at the Faculty of Theology was organized the Pastor Training Institute and at the Faculty of Arts – the Teacher Training Institute.

The Institute of Teacher Training at the University of Debrecen

The Institute of Teacher Training founded in 1925. The teacher training students matriculated as undergraduates at the Institute, and they were studying educational and psychological sciences in parallel with their university courses. In 1929 the number of the matriculated members of the Institute was 186, in 1930 – 238 (Brezsnyánszky & Fenyő, 2004).

Table 1. Matriculated members of the Teacher training Institute



The Institute was very popular among the students: the teacher qualification was attractive in comparison with the alternative possibility, the Doctorate of Philosophy however the requirements were more and seemed

more complex. The additional obligation was the following: 1. History of the Hungarian literature, 2. Psychology, logics, ethics, and history of philosophy, 3. Educational sciences, didactics, and history of education. After four academic years, the student had to spend one year in the Teacher Training Secondary School. After the practice, the students had to take an examination.

The head of the Institute (the chairman) was a professor of the university, but the operative work was the task of the Board of Directors. The Institute had its own independent staff, the Board of Directors delegated professors, private (unsalaried) lecturers, and secondary school teachers to instruct and lecture. The first chairman was *Károly Pap*, professor of literary history and the first members of the Board were: *Gyula Mitrovics*, *Nándor Láng*, *Dezső Milleker*, *Dezső Szabó*, *Jenő Darkó* professors. This group was selected and appointed by the Ministry of Religion and Education.

Professors of education were always emblematic and determinative figures of the Institute. The first professor, *Béla Tankó* (Fenyő, 2004b) (1914-1917) was originally the professor of philosophy and just temporarily held the position of the professor of education. He arrived from the so-called Kolozsvári-school of the Hungarian philosophical thinking. The circle of *Károly Böhm* built a neo-kantian system of thought, which was original and genuine. In the framework of a critical axiology, they have been concerned with the philosophy of history and philosophy of culture. (Members of the 'Kolozsvár Circle' were Bartók György, Tavaszy Sándor, Ravasz László, Makkai Sándor, Varga Béla and Tankó Béla.) The Kantian thinking broadens in their works since axiology here means: a) anthropology, because the value is the foundation of the abstract image of man; b) philosophy of culture, because the typology of values defines the system of the cultural spheres; c) philosophy of history, because development of the culture (and men) is a timely progress.

The historical-axiology of the 'Kolozsvári Circle' defined three types of 'value-class' and "value-trends". The stage of sensualism is characterized by hedonism and pleasure, the stage of rationality by utilitarianism and usefulness, the stage of reason by idealism and self-value. The personal development follows these stages. The person on the first stage is settled in the sensual instincts. Here the values are the things, which can please somebody. On the second stage, the person is bound by the meaning-system of the outside world: the sensual phenomenon associate with meaning and the self-consciousness creates its world from the elements of this external meaning-system. On the third stage, the person (the Self) is awake to its own nature, its intelligence and spirituality. The person (the Self) correlates every phenomenon of the reality to the inner intellectual order.

Therefore, education is far more than just pure intellectual training – the problem of education is an anthropological question with ethical relevance. Every man, every human being has the chance to cover the three stages of the human development. Educators and the schools provide support and encouragement, but not every person will prevail. But every person must take a try – and do his best. The school (so the university also) is a kind of human institutions, which has two crucial characteristics: freedom and universality. Universality means here not less than the research of the human reason must be absolutely boundless. There could be no closed territories, no censored fields. The truth of the scientific knowledge is not some abstract, inorganic notion, but part of the organic life itself. Freedom means autonomy for the institutions and for the persons also (students and teachers) to make their pilgrimage through the stages of the human development. And doing so

the school can be the tool of the societal allocation, as it can fairly select the best: the future leaders, the functionary of mankind.

Even though Tankó was a philosopher, he was engaged in the issues of education. In the early phase of his career, he was a secondary school teacher so he was at home in the practice and the theory of education. All through his life, he preserved the interest towards educational problems. He was a constant member of the committees dealing with the concerns of Department of Education – doctoral issues, applications and so on.

The second Professor of Education, Gyula Mitrovics (Vincze, 2004) (1918-1941) was widely approved authority in the field of the educational science, mainly in the community of the reformed (Calvinist) community. Mitrovics was a member of the Hungarian Educational Society and founder of the Hungarian Aesthetic Society. In 1940 he was the rector of the University of Debrecen. Mitrovics in his educational works shows himself a national-conservative person whose first responsibility is the commitment to the integrity of the soul of the Hungarian nation. His another characteristic was a deep and sincere religiousness, his central concept is the “clear humanity” what means not less than – thanks to the process of the education – the person could be connected directly to the transcendent. The goal of the education is exactly the dignity of the human person: the person as a citizen of god’s country. The key element of this education is the aesthetics because art is the perfect mirror, which can reflect the human nature and the human emotions: the art helps us to understand the human disposition. So the education as a science is based on the following subjects: (1) Anthropology (to state the goal, the material and the instruments of the education) (2) Aesthetics and Sociology (the spiritual and ideological sciences in the center of the process of education) (3) Theology (to support the transcendental elements of the human being). Therefore, the so-called ‘emotional culture’ (as the higher degree of the humanity and the end-result of the educational process) can be reached by the art education. The third element of his educational work is the practical orientation: he writes for the broad teacher community, and not for the academic intellectuals.

Mitrovics was very active participant in the discussion about the teacher training. According to his point of view the teacher training plays subordinated role at the universities and the system did not support the continuing professional development. Moreover, the teacher training is theoretical and stands in need of developing the practical training courses. To facilitate this process, he founded the Institute of Psychology in 1926, beside the Institute of Education, and later (in 1930) he founded the Institute of Experimental Psychology.

The third professor was Sándor Karácsony (Fenyő, 2004a) (1942-1950). The so called ‘third way concept’ of cultural philosophy was originated from his work. The elements of this concept are the following: regional (local) identity, protestant commitment, and the sense of a cultural mission.

According to the observations of his social-psychology, culture is a common product. Every community has its own culture with special characteristics and local validity, which is originated from the mutual activities and from the interactions of cooperative people. I have to underline: it is really a modern and brave, non-absolutistic culture-conception in the early decades of the 20th century.

In Debrecen (in the so called Calvinist Rome) the protestant influence was always very strong - the Transtibiscan Reformed Church District was the prior and the most influential environment of the University of Debrecen. The most significant specialties of this environment are the strong social and political engagement of the protestant intellectuals (the special orientation

(Anglo-Saxon, Swiss and Dutch), moreover an anti-monarchistic, independent political thought. On this secular ground the religious life in the protestant community has a specific nature. The respect for historical tradition and the democratic skepticism (towards the ecclesial hierarchy) are rooted in the sense of community.

In the context of the presbyterian self-government, the regional identity has special consequences. The frontier- or peripheral-being is associated with the need for the self-support. The university plays a specific role in this story as the key-point of the regional network of the intellectuals. The cultural-political engagement is completed with a culture-creating (and preserving) mission, and with the belief in the youth generation, the students. The mission of the University has been no more just the specialized academic training, but the participation in a community aimed at scientific-critical thinking. It is an existential problem – states Karácsony: education is the meeting of future and past in the present.

Karácsony's social-psychological analysis is strongly bound to this context. According to his statements the human soul has on the one hand somatic bonding and on the other transcendent or sacral nature. As the individual is autonomous - a closed system - the only possibility to expand its boundaries is the origination of a social relationship. A signal system (namely the language) enables the soul to preserve and to transfer or even to process the cultural elements. So in this sense the language is the first and most fundamental tool of understanding.

According to the social-psychological cultural theory of Karácsony, we might say that in the human world there are some ever-present elements, some basic objectivation-forms such as the law, the religion (or art and science). In this context education is no more (or not less) than the social relation itself. However, the culture is praxis in this case. The mission is - says Karácsony - to transform it to a (1) modern, (2) Hungarian, (3) and effective culture.

Finally - what does it mean: to be Hungarian? The problem of nationality is not racial or ethnic problem, but a cultural one. To be Hungarian means to share a way of thinking. And the Hungarian way of thinking means dealing with our own autonomy while we are granting our partners autonomy. So the culture makes society evident and understandable. And the quality of a society depends on the culture of its members and the culture of the groups or classes which constitute this society. So the function of education - in Karácsony's system - turns into cultural and social task, and into the problem of language pragmatics.

A place for the practical training – the Teacher Training Secondary School at the University of Debrecen

The preparatory schools are integral parts of the educator training system from the 19th Century. In Debrecen, right after the founding of the Teacher Training Institute, the University has taken an initiative of establishing a secondary school for student's practical training. In 1936 the secondary school opened its doors, in the so-called Stégmüller mansion at the 17. Simonyi Street, Debrecen.

The three main functions of this secondary school were the followings: 1. to be a complete secondary school (which is observing the educational rules of the country); 2. to be a place for preparation of the teacher trainees; 3. to be a laboratory, an experimental workshop which wants to improve the quality of the work of the secondary schools of the country. These functions

are strongly bound to the theory and praxis of the central-European university organization and to the so-called continental educational paradigm. According to this paradigm and these ideals the specialized training is a foreign body for the university, the secondary training school even stranger.

So the state of the secondary training school is two-faced. On the one hand it is an advantage that the university observes the quality and the process of the work of the secondary school, but on the other it is a very difficulty that there is no evident method to organize the school praxis of the teacher-training students, and the university doesn't help to elaborate such a method. The university primarily presses for the excellent outcomes but does not support the secondary school. And yet the Teacher Training Secondary School just in a year or two became a really popular and absolutely effective school in Debrecen. What was the secret?

The infrastructure of the school fairly reflected the state of the institution. The Teacher training secondary school was a parentless child – even the building in which it worked was an old civilian house and not a school. The classrooms were small and narrow, but the relatively small number of the children in one class enables the school to organize the productive class observations.

The teaching staff was carefully selected – the director of the secondary school religiously searched the potential teachers. When he found a promising candidate, he invited him in Debrecen. In Debrecen, after a serious discussion, the candidate presented a lecture, before the staff. So we might say that the staff was built systematically, teacher-by-teacher (Table2), and every new man was a purportedly excellent professional. The teachers were not young; they were veteran teachers at least ten or fifteen years of praxis (Table3). The first five teachers were:

Dr. Jausz Béla headmaster 18 years of praxis (mainly in a Secondary School in Kisújszállás, and at the teacher Training Institute of The University of Debrecen, as German lecturer.)

Ercsey Jakab 18,5 years of praxis (Secondary School Somssich Pál, Kaposvár)

Fehérváry Dezső 10 years of praxis (Secondary School Kossuth Lajos Cegléd)

Dr. Maday Pál 29 Secondary School (Secondary School Fazekas M. Debrecen)

Dr. Szondy György 25 Secondary School (Secondary School for Girls Debreceni)

Table 2. The development of the staff

	Appointed teacher	Part-time teacher
1936-37.	5	5
1937-38.	9	4
1938-39.	11	2
1939-40.	13	3
1940-41.	14	4
1941-42.	14	4
1942-43.	15	4
1943-44.	19	7
1944-45.		
1945-46.		
1946-47.	9 (17)	14
1947-48.	20	8

Table 3. The full staff in the year 1943/44.

		Total praxis (years)/ praxis in the Teacher Training Secondary (years) (working hours lessons/week)
Dr. Jausz Béla	German	25/8 (-)
Dr. Bada Gyula	Hungarian – Latin	7/2 (14)
Barra György	Mathematics – Science	16/7 (13)
Bars László	Art	17/6,5 (14)
Dr. Borbély András	Mathematics – Science	15/0,5 (14)
Dr. Csinády Gerő	Geography – Chemistry	18/3 (13)
Dr. Ember Ernő	Hungarian – Italian	10/1 (14)
v. Fehérváry Dezső	Latin	17/8 (8)
Gyarmathi László	Mathematics – Science	10/2 (8)
Dr. Hegedűs Lajos	German	12/2 (14)
Dr. Kiss Árpád	German - French	12/5 (12)
Dr. Madai Pál	History	36/8 (8)
Molnár József	Hungarian	12/2 (13)
Dr. Nagy József	Hungarian – Latin	22/1 (12)
Dr. Pócze János	Latin – German	9/1 (13)
Rudnay Károly	Latin – French	3/1 (14)
Ráthonyi Lajos	Physical education	6/6 (-)
Dr. Simon László	History - Geography	5/4 (14)
Dr. Tóth Lajos	Mathematics – Science	20/6 (12)

Besides the weekly regular classes the teachers were bound to look after the teacher training students at the secondary school, to manage the practical training, their lectures and the extra-curricular activities organized by the students. The teacher's duty was the organization of educational meetings and conferences and additionally meetings for parents. The teachers were supposed to publish scientific articles and papers, to be in class (or seminars) at the Institute of Teacher Training, and to take on social functions in associations and societies of Debrecen's civil sphere.

We can list the extra duties of the staff regarding the 1943/44 school year (Yearbook..., 1936-1946). The school needed the following extra functions from the teachers: Librarians (one for the teacher's and one for the student's library), scoutmaster and 'levente' (a Hungarian paramilitary organization for young men) master, keepers of the labs (the art, the science, the geography and the history lab), revenue officer, registrar, quartermaster, field-trip organizer helper of the student's art groups and so on. The typical civil duties were, for example: the membership of the Tisza Scientific Society in Debrecen.

In every year the school published a yearbook and almanac (Yearbook..., 1936-1946), which contained the important statistical data, lists of the students and teachers, index of textbooks and charts of results. In this yearbook in every year one of the teachers was bound to publish a paper. Usually, the Hungarian secondary school teachers in the school-yearbook published a paper which deals with the subject of the writer. But in the Teacher Training Secondary School of the University of Debrecen we can find a totally different state. The writings, published in the school-yearbooks deal with educational problems only. We might say this is the very indicator of the staff's educational interest and consciousness. The topics were the following:

Table 4.

1936-37.	Dr. Jausz Béla: Founding and opening the school (History of the first year)
1937-38.	v. Fehérváry Dezső: About the reading-matter of the adolescent
1938-39.	Szondy György: Family and familiarizing nature
1939-40.	Barra György: Education and milieu
1940-41.	Éber János: Twenty years of hope – the school-yearbooks of the boy's secondary schools in Debrecen, after Trianon (from 1918-19 to 1938-39)
1941-42.	Madai Pál: Education of the nation
1942-43.	v. Fehérváry Dezső: Debate on the latin language classes (The first secondary school act 1883)
1943-44.	Bars László: Art education as soul shaping

The headmaster was *Béla Jausz* (Vargáné Nagy, 2009) who had worked as a teacher at the Institute of teacher training before the foundation of the Secondary School (1936). His main task was the direction of the organization: control of the infrastructural works, hunting the possible teachers, and necessarily the coordination of the student's training in the secondary school. He was responsible for the formation of the school's image, for the school's educational and training program, for the represented values. He was a disciplined and strict leader, approved authority.

After the closing of the Teacher Training Secondary School (1949) several members of the staff carried their career at the University. One of them was Jausz. At the university, he worked as a Professor of Education, in 1956-57 (during really hard times, after the Hungarian revolution in 1956 October) he was the rector of the University of Debrecen. But not Jausz is the only one professor among the former teacher Training High School teachers: Borbély András, Csinády Gerő, Gyarmathi László, Koczogh Ákos, Pap Isván, Kiss Árpád worked as professors also. Kovács Máté was director of the Library of the University of Debrecen (the second largest library of Hungary). Hegedűs Lajos and Vajda László were professors at educational training colleges).

Three former teachers became headmaster of other secondary schools: Ercsey Jakab (in Kaposvár), Lessi Viktor (in Jászberényi), Komjáthy István (in Debrecen). Moreover we might mention Barra György, Kovács Máté and Szondy György who worked in the Hungarian state administration of the educational system. And finally there are three former teachers who later served as Secretary of State at the Hungarian Ministry of Education: Kovács Máté, Barra György, Simon László.

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