

University Doctoral (PhD) Thesis Outline

**CAREER PATHS AND SCHOOL
ESTABLISHMENT IN THE FIRST HALF OF THE
20TH CENTURY HUNGARIAN PEDAGOGY**

(Introduction of Gyula Mitrovics's lifework and academic workshop
from a qualification history research aspect)

Tamás Vincze

Thesis supervisor: Prof. Dr. Brezsnayánszky László



UNIVERSITY OF DEBRECEN

Graduate school of Human Studies

Debrecen, 2011

I. Delimitation of elaborated subject-matter, objectives

Although the title of the dissertation denotes a wider subject than the refinement subheading, choosing a title which provides a broader outlook can be justified. This dissertation is aimed at displaying the career opportunities, qualification tracks that provided the educators and pedagogy researchers of the first half of the 20th Century professional prospects and conditions for working in their field of study. We conduct this through the example of one specific academic workshop (the Debrecen School) but also we persistently draw a parallel between careers and scientific results of other workshops and scientific qualifications and disciplinary results born in the Debrecen School; furthermore, in the summary, the author of this paper arrives at conclusions which, in part, apply regardless of regions to the whole of the contemporary scholarly community forming the education in Hungary; thus a wider horizon title better recapitulates the work.

This paper is aimed at introducing a Debrecen School period of less attention, the Mitrovics era, especially the scholarly workshop that was formed by the first professor of pedagogy at the University of Debrecen. One of the reasons for detailing Gyula Mitrovics's scholar work and school establishment is the myth of the trade, unjust in our view, which credits Sándor Karácsony for the actual school establishment and the restoration of the reputation of university education studies. Another reason for introducing Mitrovics's pedagogy and research organizer initiatives is the fact that, as opposed to other professors of pedagogy, an elaborate assay of Mitrovics's lifework, previous to our earlier writings, has been a debt of honour for Hungarian education studies. Mitrovics's scientific system has not been included in the canon of pedagogy along with the frequently cited works of pedagogy professors that have become focal points in professional discourses (Ernö Fináczy, Ödön Weszely, Sándor Imre, Lajos Prohászka and others with frequently cited opuses). Hence a kind of canon revision is also meant to be part of this dissertation, though we are aware that the process of canon renewal needs a more powerful catalyst than this work.

An introduction to Mitrovics's professional career and lifework can not be complete without drawing another scholar's professional portrait whose role in Mitrovics's life was changed from the rival's to a failure, and from a failed opponent's to a loyal subordinate by

factors which crushed his career. This rival was Ödön Szelényi the Lutheran scholar of cipszer origin from the Szepes (Zips) region of Hungary, the strenuous education historian of the Evangelical church, a teacher at the Késmárk lyceum, then the Pozsony Theological Academy, and ultimately at the Budapest Veres Pálné Institute. Ödön Szelényi's lifework had been unelaborated before writings by the author of this paper preceding this dissertation called the profession's attention to the scholar so tragically unheeded in his life.

Fortunately there have been many competent presentations about Karácsony's disciples' careers, earning and completing their missions. As opposed to them no word has been about Mitrovics's disciples, although Gyula Mitrovics has also established a school with graduate students who would have excellent careers and become appreciated researchers either in education or in theology. This was the motif that made the writer of this paper introduce some of the school-forming research subjects by selecting some young teachers, demonstrators, assistant lecturers and theologians whose later careers were determined by the interest in pedagogy awakened working with Professor Mitrovics. An important field of the Mitrovics workshop self-demonstration was the *Protestáns Tanügyi Szemle* (Protestant Education Review), a partly domestic periodical. Surveying the Debrecen related articles and publications of the medium considered prestigious by the profession one can trace a local practice: the young Debrecen School researchers proved their writing skills through the pages of the Review.

Our thesis consists of two parts: in the first part the characteristics of the Dualism and the Horthy era Hungarian scholarly qualification system, its internal (unwritten) laws and the discrepancies in the formation of philosophical careers are assayed. In the second part the work of the actors of the provincial workshop mentioned above is introduced in close connection to the first part and to our research on qualification history. Thus the first part of the dissertation is an interpretation framework and also a key to the second part. In our view the two parts are organically interconnected, which justifies the presence of chapters that can be perceived as overly detailed and meticulous (this approach underlies the detailed examination of the rector's speech at Mitrovics's doctoral graduation, for it gives depiction of the value and function of a doctoral degree in the era – from a professor's point of view).

II. The methods and aspects applied

In order to elaborate the subject matter from multiple aspects we found the combined application of three approaches most practical. In part we relied on domestic education history research which has been the most successful branch of education studies. András Németh's comprehensive works, Béla Pukánszky's examinations of the education studies traditions at the Kolozsvár-Szeged University, the Debrecen exploration led by László Brezsnyánsky which examined in local context the pedagogy-teacher training directions brought forth by significant actors of the Debrecen school all provided guidance and methodology example in formulating basic questions and scrutinizing interconnections in our own research.

In addition we followed patterns of domestic qualification research bearing in mind the tendencies and methods preferred by researchers of the subject. This paper succeeds in broadening previous horizons with new results (and methods). As they used mainly archives, records and bylaws when describing the interwar period associate professor, Andor Ladányi and Judit Bíró never mentioned the insider secrets of the system, the unwritten rules and rituals of habilitation. Based on memoirs and scholars' biographies, in the present paper we attempted to explore some peculiarities of Hungarian habilitations, the etiquette and the actions of power games underlying the preparation and process of qualifications. This approach did not take part in analyses of the subject before. We also used data from memoirs and scholars' biographies at the description of department admissions and collecting peculiarities of doctoral acts –obviously applying appropriate resource criticism.

Using the compendious denomination “qualification history” needs some explanation along with the chapters of this dissertation that can be termed as such. In this paper introduction of interwar career opportunities in pedagogy is divided into three posts: the top level was that of the full professors, scholars granted with university departments. The next level was that of the associate professors, while the third level contained those who could only obtain a university doctorate. Obviously only the latter two meant academic qualification, as being appointed to a department was not part of the qualification system, but a status, a position (gained mostly as a result of scientific merits). (It must be noted here that the associate professor act – in itself a part of this dissertation – got institutionalized in the qualification system as a result of specific role distortions, for originally it meant granting the right to hold lectures). However, these three posts were perceived as three stages of an

academic career of the Horthy era, and their stratification was evident in the time, which makes the term qualification history just right for describing these levels.

We also apply a third aspect to our dissertation, namely the approach we called parallel biographies. The point of this is constantly comparing and contrasting careers intersecting each other, which gives newer prospects to understanding scholarly careers as source texts. Although there have been references to the parallel biographies-approaches in the biographical literature, consequent contrasts are scarce. The most instructive of these was István P. Zimándi's Péterfy monograph with a comparison of the Beöthy-Péterfy rivalry.

In collecting the input material we used printed and manuscript materials in archive sources. The documents of the Debrecen Royal Hungarian University (from 1921: Debrecen Royal Hungarian István Tisza University) Faculty of Philosophy from the 1914-1950 period (first of all the Faculty Council records which had, according to contemporary customs, the habilitation process documents attached as well as the reports of doctoral comprehensive examinations passed at the faculty before 1949). The university annals were used to determine Professor Mitrovics's schedule and subjects in each semester. Among published sources the dissertations of Mitrovics's disciples played an important role to reconstruct the professor's thoughts lingering on his followers' works. Szelényi's career was traced using the periodicals of the schools where the Evangelical scholar took up a teaching position for shorter or longer periods.

The contemporary Protestant press provided a rich (so to say exhaustive) source of treasures. From the Reformed and Evangelical church papers not only each smallest detail of the scholars' walks of life could have been understood (like Mitrovics's application for the Sárospatak Academy literature and art history department in 1902, or Szelényi's formal retirement in 1927), but also the scope of operation provided by churches to their scholars and teachers of the era could have been mapped. We do not want to list the periodicals studied, just mention that beginning with smaller devotional papers (like Sárospataki Lapok, Debreceni Református Szemle, Hegyen Épített Város, Evangélikusok Lapja) to serious scholarly periodicals (e.g. Debreceni Lelkészi Tár, Theologiai Szaklap, Protestáns Tanügyi Szemle) the reviewed media were rather heterogeneous. Certainly our observation included the leading pedagogy periodicals of the age, too.

III. Results, main observations

In our dissertation we discuss the ways, typical and atypical cases of entering the world of education disciplines in the first half of the 20th Century. We outline the differences between customary systems of raising the new generations in pedagogy and other fields of philosophical studies, which, in part, can be deduced from the special position of education studies at universities. We trace the possible routes to professorship and list impediments of the continuity in case of individual schools; we list the specifications of becoming an associate professor.

Within this framework it is comprehensible why Gyula Mitrovics assumed above capacity the protection of university pedagogy prestige, but also the same framework – Mitrovics's academic career – makes one understand why he refused the same task in the 1920s. The disciplinary double bind, professing aesthetics and pedagogy collaterally, in our view, burdened the professor's situation and had an unfavorable effect on his later reputation, too. Also, one can find the same causes, wasting resources on absorption in multiple academic works, frittering behind Szelényi's unsuccessful actions. Comparing the two careers, however, shows that it was not advisable to exit – or be exiled from – the academic (or ecclesial) community that had given the scholarly career a start and provided inspiration for the scholars of the time. One strong reason why Ödön Szelényi's career broke down so conspicuously is this becoming rootless and secession from his earlier background and consequent outsider position in other consideration communities. The fact that his lifework almost completely lacked synthesis creation and theoretician bases thus remaining solely a compilation of data, publishing laboriously explored education history processes without analysis was also a hindrance of his career.

This present study lays an emphasis on the accomplished characterization of the circle of the professor's students and the circle's self-representation. Observing educators' workshops it must be considered that professors of this field – apart from working on their own subject matter – are charged with several other tasks as well. Unlike professors in other philosophical studies, their interests are engaged in not only the advance in the narrower field of research, but also problems considering the complexity of education, the questions of teacher education. The school establishment activities of the interwar period pedagogy professors must be viewed from this aspect. In spite of the significant overload in work the pedagogy professors' initiatives were basically successful – but not equally spectacular.

Mitrovics's pedagogy school belonged to the less spectacularly but successfully operating ones. The more explicit and noticeable field of his academic activity was the research organizing work he did as the chairman of the Society for Aesthetics, in part, because the society operation was related to the capital city, and in part, as he became related to the prominent actors of Hungary's literary and art life. Conducting psychological experiments in Debrecen and participating in supervising students' dissertations could seem of less importance, though the workload of the latter was more complex and demanding. There is a reason why we touched upon the connection between the thesis topics marked out by Mitrovics and the dissertations that resulted from them. The reason is that this close connection refers undoubtedly to Mitrovics's school establishment ambition and his responsibility for developing the following generation. He did not await for his students to come up with complete themes but he himself provided the students he deemed talented ready to use concepts.

When introducing Mitrovics's school the relatively large number of students with previous theological studies must be noted (on behalf of the school composition). The practice of accepting and assisting to graduation of these candidates came not only from a familiar preference and religious conviction but from the evident local intention to uphold the precedence of the Faculty of Theology among other faculties and to expect the faculties to cooperate with the leading Faculty. This expectation was not a burden for the educator constructing a Christian education system and also because the theologian doctoral candidates were top of the rank. The most accomplished dissertations on education history and education theory were written by ministers and graduated theologians (e.g. Tihamér Kiss, Sándor Csighy, Dezső Főnyad).

Weighing the success of a professional career can take several means. The number and quality of publications gives away a lot about a given scholar, however, insufficient for properly judging a lifework. Roles and functions accepted in publicity also add to understanding the career, still do not allow the posterity for a circumstantial portrayal. Without acknowledging the circle of disciples, the workshop built by the professor the observation of his achievement would be meaningless: the success of his educator work in the tightest sense would be eclipsed. All these details still do not process a cohesive image unless the evidence gained in the research phase is structured in an interpretation framework. According to our experience the framework giving the most painstaking elaboration for the scrutiny of a scholar's achievement is the academic qualification system of the era (all written and

unwritten rules of the system) as it presents the reference points that assist the most authentic introduction of the hits and fiascos of a career. Also the evaluation of the situation or prestige of a discipline in a certain epoch is best identified by the firm data of the intellectual graph of the qualification system, the academic degrees of those who constitute the discipline in question.

IV. Main publications about the theme of the dissertation

Book

(Ugrai János társszerzővel): Szelényi Ödön (kismonográfia). Országos Pedagógiai Könyvtár és Múzeum, Budapest, 2005, p. 145 p.

Study published in foreign language

„Pädagogische Schulen” an der Debrecener Universität vor 1950. In: Klaus-Peter Horn–András Németh–Béla Pukánszky–Heinz-Elmar Tenorth (Hg.): Erziehungswissenschaft in Mitteleuropa, Osiris Kiadó, Budapest, 2001, 376-385. p.

Studies and book chapters published in Hungarian language

(Brezsnyánszky László társszerzővel): Folytonosság és megszakítottság a Debreceni Egyetem neveléstudományi iskoláinak tudósképző tevékenységében. In: Kelemen Elemér – Falus Iván (szerk.): Tanulmányok a neveléstudomány köréből 2005. Műszaki Könyvkiadó, Budapest, 2006, p. 177-192

Az egyetemi tanszéketöltés rendszere a dualizmus Magyarországon. In: Buda András – Kiss Endre (szerk.): Interdiszciplináris pedagógia és az elvárások forradalma. A III. Kiss Árpád Emlékkonferencia előadásai. Debreceni Egyetem Neveléstudományi Tanszék, Kiss Árpád Archívum Könyvtára, Debrecen, 2005, p. 122-130

Arcképvázlat Mitrovics Gyuláról. In: Brezsnyánszky László (szerk.): A „Debreceni Iskola” neveléstudomány-történeti vázlata. Gondolat Kiadó, Budapest, 2007, p. 89-103.

Mitrovics Gyula, az egyetemi professzor. In: Brezsnyánszky László (szerk.): A „Debreceni Iskola” neveléstudomány-történeti vázlata. Gondolat Kiadó, Budapest, 2007, p. 104-117.

Mitrovics Gyula „műhelye” a Debreceni Egyetemen. In: Brezsnyánszky László (szerk.): A „Debreceni Iskola” neveléstudomány-történeti vázlata. Gondolat Kiadó, Budapest, 2007, p. 118-127.

Mitrovics Gyula egyetemi és egyetemen kívüli szerepvállalása, közéleti funkciói. In: Brezsnýánszky László (szerk.): A „Debreceni Iskola” neveléstudomány-történeti vázlata. Gondolat Kiadó, Budapest, 2007, p. 128- 139.

A Debreceni Iskola és a Protestáns Tanügyi Szemle. In: Brezsnýánszky László (szerk.): A „Debreceni Iskola” neveléstudomány-történeti vázlata. Gondolat Kiadó, Budapest, 2007, 140-148.

Szelényi Ödön (1877-1931). In: Brezsnýánszky László (szerk.): A „Debreceni Iskola” neveléstudomány-történeti vázlata. Gondolat Kiadó, Budapest, 2007, p. 165-169.

A Protestáns Tanügyi Szemle indulása és első öt éve. In: Kováts Dániel (szerk.): Széphalom. A Kazinczy Ferenc Társaság évkönyve. 15. kötet. Kazinczy Ferenc Társaság, Sátoraljaújhely, 2005, p. 273-279

Mitrovics Gyula és a nőnevelés. In: Kováts Dániel (szerk.): Széphalom. A Kazinczy Ferenc Társaság Évkönyve. 18. kötet. Kazinczy Ferenc Társaság, Sátoraljaújhely, 2008, p. 365-373.

A nők iskolázásának kérdése Mitrovics Gyulánál. In: Brezsnýánszky László – Fenyő Imre: Kutatás és képzés. In honorem Orosz Gábor. Nyíregyházi Főiskola Pedagógusképző Kara, Debrecen – Nyíregyháza, 2010, p. 129-146.

Conference-presentations regarding to the theme of the dissertation

„Pädagogische Schulen” an der Debrecener Universität vor 1950. Erziehungswissenschaft in Mitteleuropa. Nemzetközi konferencia, Budapest-Keszthely, 2000. október 8-11.

Mitrovics Gyula professzor munkatársai és tanítványai a Debreceni Egyetemen. III. Országos Neveléstudományi Konferencia, Budapest, 2003. okt. 9-11.

A Debreceni Iskola recenziója és reflexiói. Kapcsolatok és kötődések - A „Debreceni Iskola” tanítványi köre és kapcsolati hálójá c. konferencia. Debrecen, 2005. máj. 24.

(Fenyő Imrével): Mitrovics Gyula és Karácsony Sándor közéleti szerepvállalása, egyetemen kívüli tevékenysége. V. Országos Neveléstudományi Konferencia, Budapest, 2005. okt. 6-8.

(Holik Ildikóval): A debreceni iskola recenziói és reflexiói. V. Országos Neveléstudományi Konferencia, Budapest, 2005. okt. 6-8.

Disszerensek és értekezéseik a debreceni pedagógiai műhely első korszakában. Interdiszciplináris pedagógia és az oktatás finanszírozása. IV. Kiss Árpád Emlékkonferencia. Debrecen, 2005. nov. 4-5.

Mitrovics Gyula egyetemi környezete. VI. Országos Neveléstudományi Konferencia, Budapest, 2006. okt. 26-28.

Mitrovics Gyula a debreceni egyetem élén. VII. Országos Neveléstudományi Konferencia, Budapest, 2007. okt. 25-27.

A Debreceni Iskola sajátos kapcsolata a Protestáns Tanügyi Szemlével. Interdiszciplináris pedagógia és az eredményesség akadályai. V. Kiss Árpád Emlékkonferencia, Debrecen, 2007. szeptember 28-29.

A jubileumi emlékkönyv mint neveléstörténeti forrás. VIII. Országos Neveléstudományi Konferencia, Budapest, 2008. nov. 13-15.

Rítusok és íratlan szabályok a 20-as, 30-as évek magyar egyetemi világában. Magyar Tudomány Ünnepe, „Campusok népe – ifjúságkutatás” c. konferencia, Nyíregyháza, Pedagógusképző Kar, 2010. nov. 9.