

# **THESES OF THE DOCTORAL DISSERTATION**

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## **THE PRACTICAL WORKSHOPS OF THE TEACHER TRAINING**

The examination of the role of the training schools in the aspects of teacher training

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## 1. The goal of the dissertation- defining the subject

An increased attention has been paid to the question of teacher training in the public education in the last decades; the demand for quality education has been strengthened. *The Bologna-process* resulted in the reconsideration of the training both in the aspects of structure and content. The necessity of the *professional and competence-based* training of the teacher trainees and the ensuring of the right proportions of theory and experience in the preparations came to the front.

The first step in the transformation of the Hungarian teacher training is the governmental decree No.111 of 1997 that significantly helped to make the training more effective. It modified and fixed the main theoretical fields and proportions of the teacher training, thus, beside the theoretical knowledge the practical side also came to the front.

In spite of this, several problems arise in connection with the teacher training. One of the debated fields is the situation and affiliation of the training places, since not all of the higher educational institutes (dealing with teacher training) undertake to maintain the training schools and to organize the teacher training there. Those higher educational institutes that traditionally have training schools often have just a formal role, namely they do not always have the intention and the ability to use their rights to maintain the school. In many cases it is also debated whether it is necessary to maintain a separated training school for the teacher training, or it is sufficient for the students to complete the required teaching practice in the so-called basis-schools that –according to the critics of the training schools- provide an even more life-like field for the training of the future teachers.

It is not easy to create ideal conditions for the co-operation. These schools are in a particular situation: beside the public educational tasks they have higher educational tasks as well, thus, compared to the „traditional” schools, their work is significantly more complex than the work of the “traditional” schools.

We can meet several proportions, suggestions and new training models (some of them already work in practice) in the specialized literature in order to make the teacher training more effective. Presumably, the Bologna-process will result in the renewing of the practical training and this process will cause transformation in the higher education and also in the system of the teacher training.

Since there is a debate over the judgement of the practical teacher training and over the situation and affiliation of the training schools nowadays and no extensive research has been made in this subject yet, the examination of this field is considered to be necessary.

The *goal* of our research is the exposition of the characteristics and problems of the practical teacher training; the examination of the training schools' role in the aspects of social functions in the system of the Hungarian public and higher education.

## **2. Applied methods**

The essay consists of two major units. One is based on the exposition of the national and international specialized literature, whereas the other unit discusses the results of our empirical researches.

The *subjects of the research*: the relationship between the teacher training and the higher education; training schools as public educational institutes in specific situation; and the contact between the higher educational institute that maintains the training school and the training school itself.

We set up the following *hypotheses*:

- Although the training schools have double attachment, the public educational projects are dominant in their functioning.
- The training schools –as „pedagogical workshops”- are attached to the teacher training in order to give a chance to the trainees to apply the knowledge obtained in the education *in use* both in the field of disciplinar and pedagogical profession.
- There is usually only a formal co-operation (dialogue) between the institutes of higher education and the training schools.

In order to prove the validity of our hypotheses, beyond the exposition of the relevant specialized literature, we analyzed the pedagogical schedule of seventeen training schools in the country then we made a questionnaire-research in the 12 training schools of the four Hungarian universities. In the fall semester of 2003/2004 335 teachers were asked and in the fall semester of 2004/2005 485 graduating students of the institutes were also asked to complete our questionnaires. Parallel with this, we made interviews with 50 teachers and 134 teacher trainees in the training schools of the University of Debrecen in order to examine the local chances.

While selecting the pedagogical schedules we applied the method of the layered statistical sampling according to the type of the higher educational institution and the training school. The teachers were chosen according to their sex, the type of their subjects, their teaching experience and their leading teacher-activity and the students were chosen according to their sex and major to complete the questionnaires. Our aim was to guarantee the

representativity of the sample, namely, that all members of the examined population have the same chance to get into the sample representing the characteristic features of the population.

During our nationwide research we applied also qualitative and quantitative methods since the characteristics of the statistical sample and the features of the examined field required the parallel use of these methods. Thus, we got an extensive picture about the practical teacher training and the training schools.

We examined the pedagogical schedules with the help of content-analysis in order to explore the hidden message and the context system of the examined texts. To evaluate the results of the questionnaires we applied different statistical methods (maincomponent-analysis, clusteranalysis and correlation analysis.) We analysed the data of the research in several aspects, thus we could find other connections. While analyzing the interviews we wanted to utilize the opportunities offered by the quantitative and qualitative analyzing techniques.

As it turned out, there are two ways to use the results. First, they can contribute directly to the improvement of the public education and the solution of the actual problems through the recognition and the more differentiative interpretation of the Hungarian teaching mentality. Moreover, they can help to answer the open questions of the teacher training, they give a picture about the palpable teacher-need of the public education and they can serve as a starting point for the further comparative researches.

It is essential for the higher educational institutions, for the training schools, for the teachers, teaching in the training schools and for the teacher trainees to face certain problems and to become acquainted with the facts and data that can help them to get over their difficulties. It is also important to strengthen the sense of responsibility on the part of the teachers and the schools in the field of education, teaching and the defining of their basic principles. We think that the results can be useful both for the teacher trainees and for the already experienced teachers.

The research examines actual problems both in national and international aspects therefore it can give some essential points of view and data to clear several professional questions.

### 3. The results of the research

a) Within the field of the teacher training- higher education, we examined the legitimate background of the Hungarian teacher training and the problems, tendencies, efforts and ways of the teacher training.

While presenting the ways of the practical teacher training we distinguished five developmental stages. The first stage represents the notion that it is not necessary for the future teachers to take part in theoretical and practical pedagogical training, since it is sufficient to possess the amount of knowledge that they transmit to their students. According to the second stage, the knowledge of the teacher must be versatile and profound. The third stage emphasizes the necessity of the practical seminars at the universities. The fourth stage unambiguously represents the importance of the practical training of the teacher trainees and the indispensability of the training schools. Finally, the fifth stage contains the so-called „university clinics” and „laboratory schools”, which can be regarded as a kind of idealistic models of the practical teacher training.

In our essay we surveyed the models existing in the European higher education and teacher training. We pointed out that the European higher education is a dual system that beside the university-level trainings includes shorter, practice-oriented trainings as well. In the European teacher training systems both the so- called „parallel” and the „follower” model can be found. The teacher trainees have two possibilities to become „full-value” teachers: either with a final exam at the end of their studies or after getting the degree they have to practice some years in a school and take another exam. The practical training (that can be made in the training schools and/or in the outside partner institutions) has an emphasized role in every European model. Nowadays the European teacher training is switching over to the 2- cycle-training. The basic aim of the overall reform is the creation of the quality-training and the attainment of the high-level proficiency. This is supplemented with the growth of the rate and weight of the practical training and with the coordination of theory and practice.

The major task of the Hungarian teacher training is to help the teacher trainees to use their theoretical, psychological, pedagogical and methodological knowledge (attained in the higher educational institutes) appropriately in practice. Students, by visiting the schools get information about the pedagogical profession then under the control of their supervisor teachers they themselves teach the students. The last stage of the teaching-practice is the closing lesson. The lesson-preparing meetings, the common analyzation and evaluation help significantly the work of the teacher trainees.

Our researches show that the training schools provide appropriate opportunities for the students to try their knowledge in practice as well and they want to make the link stronger between theory and practice. This statement is justified by those results that showed the primary role of the independent teaching in the field of the students' professional development. The essential role of the training schools is proven by the fact that the majority of the students (more than  $\frac{3}{4}$ ) want to teach after getting the degree and many of them started to be interested in the pedagogical profession through the positive experience of the teaching practice. They are motivated mainly by the love of children and teaching, and the sense of vocation. Those who do not have the intention to teach complained about the lack of the financial esteem or they just want to make their way in a different field.

During the examination of the respondents' teacher-image it became clear that the intelligence and the possession of the cognitive abilities are considered to be the most important features in the teaching by the practicing teachers, while the students emphasized creativity. A more complex and flexible teacher image is reflected from their answers than from the answers of the teacher trainees. This can serve as an important evidence for the teacher training since it is a basic requirement that the training could adapt itself to the changes and to the new challenges in the aspects of content and method. Both groups emphasized the need for creating a special competence, namely, the importance of the skills of organization, presentation, evaluation, conflict-handling and the importance of the ability to lead and solve problems. The respondents said that they like the teaching profession because they can teach and educate children and teaching means a great challenge to them. The teacher trainees do not really see the diversity of the job. They are directed by the intention to help others.

The students' possible negative attitude and ignorance can cause further problems in the teacher training within the training schools. Finding the right balance of theory and practice can be resulted in further difficulties. The students criticized the work of higher educational institutes, because they thought that the high-level education provides a scientist-training and does not prepare for the teaching in the elementary and high- schools. However, they stressed the importance of the fact that they could examine the life of the schools and the world of teachers and pupils. They emphasized the importance of the experience that they collected during the teaching practice. They regard the training schools as institutes where the theoretical knowledge can be interwoven with the practical knowledge. Several students emphasized that they were satisfied with their supervisor teachers, because these teachers

helped their professional development. This experience also helped them to have a good time in their training schools.

Our research proved that the present teacher training follows primarily the model of the application of special sciences, in other words, it emphasizes the importance of the theoretical knowledge that, during the time of application, leads to the development of the professional competence. Furthermore, the importance of the practice-oriented model can also be noticed, which says that the teacher trainee needs a model teacher to learn the profession. But the reflective model has a less important role, in which the teacher applies his or her acquired knowledge and experience, acts consciously, sets out from actual problems, makes classroom-researches and use these results in the work. It would make the practical training more effective, if the teacher trainees' professional and methodological training started earlier and if the teaching practice was longer. The contental and methodological renewing of the teacher training would also help the creation of a more practice-oriented training.

While analyzing the interviews, we found that the new structure brought significant changes in the training as compared to the earlier traditions in the aspects of the contental questions and time-limits, therefore, the respondent teachers seemed to be rather pessimistic in this subject. They greeted the new requirements with restraint however just as the students they regard them as being practicable. The interviews clearly showed that the teachers within the limits of their chances endeavoured to create the „workshop nature” of the schools. Moreover, they urge the strenghtening of the practical side that they want to achieve by raising the time-limit that is used for the practicing of the teacher role and for the independent work of the teacher trainees.

The seniors also regard this field as important since they think that the practical training has bigger significance in the teacher training than the theoretical, methodological, pedagogical and psychological knowledge. They considered the practical training important in the aspects of getting experience, getting acquainted with the teaching profession and checking their own suitability. The country teaching practice was also useful where the students could gain experience in a different environment.

b) In our research we examined the most important projects, goals and basic principles of the training schools and the social expectations and demands. We examined the manifestation of the public and higher educational functions of the training schools; can they be regarded as the ground for new innovations and how the particular role and special situations of the training schools manifest themselves.

While analyzing the pedagogical schedules of the chosen schools we reached the conclusion that all schools are based on traditions and in the same time they try to preserve their competitiveness among the public institutions by the high standard work and the colorful programs. Their aim is to create the dialogue and the professional autonomy. The model of an open school is outlined from the pedagogical schedules in the aspects of values, basic principles, aims, projects and connection- seeking. One segment of the documents shows the characteristics of a „market-oriented” institute while other programs suggest the ideas of a „didactic school.”

It justifies our hypotheses that the institutes emphasized primarily their public educational functions in their pedagogical schedules and the teacher training projects have minor significance in the examined documents. Our questionnaire also proved that the training schools are usually expected to practise the traditional public educational tasks on the social level: the teachers and the students regard the training schools as high-standard educational institutes. Being in harmony with the results of the earlier researches, the expectations towards the training schools now are still the same as earlier: the significance of the development of the cognitive competence; the social adaptation and the necessary norms of behaviour. Whereas the teachers emphasize the development of the personality, the students consider the transmission of the practical knowledge as important.

According to our hypotheses, there are intentions to develop „pedagogical workshops” in several pedagogical schedules and the aim of the schools is to serve as a model to other schools. The questionnaires show that the expectation of functioning as a workshop is important for the teachers, while the students emphasize the significance of the model.

The respondent teachers are satisfied mainly with the number of the students who study further in a higher educational institute, with the results of the competitions and the level of the teaching, while the students are satisfied with the professional competence of the teachers.

The respondent teachers and students found the training schools as strict and authoritarian, high- standard, stimulating and open.

The main task of the supervisor teachers is considered to be the education of the pupils and the methodological preparation of the teacher trainees. The development of the personality is less important for the students; they regarded the professional preparation as more important than the teachers. At the end of the row we find the activities that are beyond the traditional educational projects: the contact with the higher educational institute and the participation in the scientific life.

The respondents want the supervisor teachers to be their professional advisors. It is also important to give advice and to help and to inspire the trainees. The model- role is significantly more important for the teachers than for the teacher trainees. The trainees would rather get an inspiring critique from the supervisor teachers.

c) The connection between the higher educational institutes and the training schools, the forms and chances of co-operation, the dialogue and the ambition of openness were really important in our examinations. We claimed that the colleagues play the most important role in the professional connection-system of the teachers. There is a smaller need for the help of the director and the methodology teacher. The importance of the supervisor teacher is proven by the fact that the students turn to them immediately, if they need a professional advice. The helping role of the others is really negligible.

The respondent teachers and the tutors of the higher institutions meet mainly on the occasions of the losing lessons and they keep the contact through professional forums and personal consultations. The higher institute provides the creation of the appropriate conditions for the teaching schools. The co-operation is the least between the training school and the maintainer higher educational institute. According to our examinations, the teachers of the training schools think that the possibilities of the co-operation with the higher institutes are insufficient. The contact would be made better, if the tutors of the higher institution visited the closing lessons more regularly and gave a better support to the teachers of the training schools, furthermore, if the teachers were more opened towards the higher educational institute and broadened the possibilities of the co-operation. The courses, organized by the institutes or the further vocational trainings offer good possibilities in this field. It would increase the efficiency of the training, if the higher institutes took a bigger share in the professional preparing of the teacher trainees and in the creating of the appropriate conditions of the training schools.

Our researches show that the training schools –within the present conditions- work concentrating mainly on the public educational tasks. The focal point of their operational system and the value-centre of their schedule arise from this. They join the teacher training mainly as „practical pedagogical workshops” providing field to the teacher trainees to try and apply their disciplinar knowledge in the schools. These training schools can be mentioned as „university clinics” in the aspects of their school subjects and methodology. The schools get no or little help from their higher educational background with regard to their complex

schedules or their innovative, experimental mission. The (contental, methodological) system of mutuality and common experimentation is hardly developed.

Our examinations explored the actual questions of the practical teacher training and the characteristics of the training schools. After introducing the 2- cycle- education out researches could be continued by the examination of the scenes of the practical teacher training using the experience of the new structure.

## 5. Publications in the subject of the dissertation

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