

**The Theses of a University Doctoral Dissertation (PhD)**

***ETHNOGRAPHY RELATED SUBJECTS IN THE  
HIGHER EDUCATIONAL TRAINING OF LOWER  
PRIMARY TEACHERS***

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## 1. Objective of this dissertation and the description of its theme

I have been teaching subjects, such as tradition knowledge, folkloristic children's games, socio-ethnography, and introduction to the science of ethnography, at the Szent István University Faculty of Applied and Professional Arts, where the higher educational training of lower primary teachers is one of the headlines of higher education.

During my workdays, whenever I ask questions about the meaning and denotation of particular words (e.g.: What is *bride / marriage market*? What is a *spindle*? Who is a *best man*?), which are included in folk songs that I have sung, my students verily look at me at least as puzzled as I look at them. Nonetheless, later in time, when they become practicing lower primary teachers, they must answer similar questions, because the texts of these folk songs, folk (fairy) tales, and legends date back with 150 to 200 years or so. These reflect the working order, habitual system, tools and symbols of the world of the Hungarian peasants that must be explained to children who grow up in the virtual world of computers.

My university studies pursued in ethnography as well as my experiences gained in the course of my teaching career in the training of lower primary teachers motivated me to investigate the traditions of the education of ethnography in the training scheme of lower primary teachers.

A complex analysis method is required in order to do so to comprehend properly how the structure of subjects applied in the training scheme of lower primary teachers reacts to the requirements of public education regulated by legally binding curriculums, and furthermore on what level the ethnographical and folkloristic knowledge are represented in these curriculums and structure of subjects and whether this knowledge constitutes integral part of the teaching material.

The ground of the research linked to the theme of this dissertation is composed of the Szent István University Faculty of Applied and Professional Arts as well as other lower primary teachers' training colleges of Hungary that assisted me in collecting relevant information concerning what ethnographical content related subjects are taught by the various departments of the concerned institutions.

What sort of ethnographical knowledge the college students have acquired has been another paramount issue to have been assayed, because a preponderance of the textbooks applied at

primary schools incorporates ethnographical and tradition oriented phenomena and knowledge which, as I have already indicated above, must be elucidated. The importance of the presence of ethnographical knowledge in the training scheme of primary lower teachers can be proven as a result of the analysis of questionnaires connected to the ethnographical knowledge of college students and of the evaluation of textbooks used at primary schools that focused on their ethnographical content.

The objective of my educational performance and of this dissertation is to prepare such a package of ethnography related subjects which can be linked to the type of higher education conducted at the lower primary teachers' colleges and to the fields of general erudition and which supplement the knowledge material of the concerned subjects with the relevant ethnographical information in hope of training the new generations of lower primary teachers to become sufficiently competitive to pass on those collective values that have constituted part of the Hungarian erudition and culture for centuries and still represent the foundation of the culture of our national history, present, and future today.

The structure of this thesis has been set up contingent upon this research plan, by which, I sincerely hope, I can evince that (i) all ethnography related subjects retain a momentous value intermediating and preserving function in the lower primary teachers' training scheme and (ii) it would be necessary to assure legislatively that, of the list of subjects taught at lower primary teachers' institutions, ethnography should be a mandatory, basic science, rather than an optional course. As regards interested students, it would be more encouraging for the future, if ethnography could be opted for as an independent field of erudition.

## **2. Applied methods and sources related to the theme of this dissertation**

When I compiled my treatise, I endeavoured all the way to ground it on a wide range of sources and bibliography currently of avail. I, in the initial part of my dissertation, have exerted efforts to describe the status quo of the education of ethnography the most accurately possible by the application of historical and specialized sources when presenting the historical antecedents of the education of ethnography as well as the ethnographical programmes and curriculums developed and implemented to date. If the statutory provisions and curricular stipulations concerning the training scheme of lower primary teachers and public education are followed, it can be portrayed what is meant by ethnographical knowledge and how it emerges in the structure of subjects of the training scheme referred to.

In addition to my own questionnaire aided survey, the status quo of its representation in the national and folklore knowledge is introduced in light of two other assessments that share similar topics.

The results of the questionnaire aided surveys provide answers to the ethnographical knowledge of college students majoring in lower primary teaching studies. The analysis of textbooks used at primary schools in view of their ethnographical content on the other hand verify that this sort of knowledge powerfully penetrate our contemporary public education. Hypotheses that I have attempted to define as theses on the basis of the aforementioned questionnaire aided surveys and the subject descriptions provided by the lower primary teachers' training colleges were developed and designated as a result of the research in concern to the historical and theoretical background.

A lion's share of the written sources (more specifically Folks' Elementary School Curriculums, the Curriculums of Lower Primary Teachers' Training Institutions) used in this paper were provided by the National Educational Library and Museum and the library of the Szent István University Faculty of Applied and Professional Arts.

The subject descriptions supplied by other national lower primary teachers' training colleges, which were delivered on the basis of mutual correspondence, constitute relevant part of the sources used.

## **3. Listing the results in the thesis**

This doctoral dissertation is composed of four principal sections. The first two discusses the historical and theoretical summary of the education of ethnography that, as an issue to be solved, has been present since the evolution of the science of ethnography. Nonetheless, the science of ethnography that had evolved and had been institutionalized toward the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century was started under organized circumstances at the University of Szeged only from 1929 onwards. The headline of the education of ethnography was manifested in the training of ethnographers. Concurrently, the ethnographical knowledge and that of the “folks’ lifestyle” were not taught in the framework of independent subjects at all despite all endeavours; only the syllabi of particular subjects contained such themes and ken that were associated with the subject matters of the science of ethnography.

The curriculums, curricular theories, and integrated ethnographical programmes outlined in the second section well evidence that there is a demand toward and need for the communication and teaching of ethnographical knowledge. Textbooks and workbooks, of which folkloristic and tangible ethnographical ken plays a crucial role in education, were produced for many programmes. Concurrently it can also be identified that there are particular topics, such as folkloristic children’s games, folk songs, folk (fairy) tales, the habits of the jollifications on certain calendar days, which on the other hand can be adapted in the knowledge system of the receiving subject(s).

Of the curriculums and programmes reviewed, there are excellently elaborated ones that were produced for many grades (primary school grades 1 to 8, or possibly secondary school classes). Supplemented with the designated objectives, task and requirement system, textbooks and workbooks for specific classes, as well as teachers’ tutorials, these can impart such a complex concept, in view of the different ages’ peculiarities, of the folkloristic culture that can meet our expectation and satisfy our demand to have the traditional folkloristic culture of the [Hungarian] peasants as the foundation of Hungarian erudition for the coming generations and not only as exhibited artefacts stashed in museums. The existence of the elaborated and expounded programmes shows that any of the school levels is expedient for the education of ethnographical knowledge. Nevertheless, it can regretfully be concluded that there is no such a structural pyramid of these diverse school levels until today in concern to the education of ethnography which could ensure an opportunity to expand the acquired ethnographical cognizance and provide such a national, folkloristic, ethnographical, and national erudition rest for the coming generations that, as regards the forthcoming decades and their future, would create a firm basis for such an unyielding identity and national self-recognition of which existence today is utterly questionable.

In the 1980s and '90s, the lower primary teachers' training schools in Jászberény and Zsámbék held such courses that incorporated relevant national and folkloristic and ethnographical content, even though in the frame of specialized collegium courses "only". A negligible per cent of the graduated lower primary teachers took part in such a training, so the concern remains, *id est* who will undertake to pass on and convey the folkloristic cultural values at the schools?

Issues to be resolved in this field abound both in public and higher education. Yet, if the matter of the education of ethnography is approached from any direction, we return to the very same point which happens to be that it must be clarified whether the proper education of experts for the purpose of teaching national and folkloristic knowledge and ethnography has been settled. The communication of ethnographical knowledge reconciled in the frame of the aligned integrated and independent subjects can function efficaciously and authentically in view of the profession only if the educators are well prepared for this purpose.

The second section reviews how the ethnographical and folkloristic elements were incorporated in the curriculums of the lower primary teachers' training scheme between 1868, when the Act on the public education of folks was ratified, and today. Relying on the curriculums delineated in this chapter, the triple segmentation of the national, folkloristic and ethnographical contents can be well identified.

The first period dates to 1868, when the Act on the public education of folks was ratified, until 1948, the year of nationalization [by the Communist regime]. The curriculums of the lower primary teachers' training institutions typical to this era, and those of the public primary schools for folks familiarized concurrently, were rich in principally local and folkloristic knowledge in the subjects of understanding practices, reading, geography, singing, physical education, manual labour, economical and household practices. The social expectations of the age toward the lower primary teachers were high, because they were considered as the intellectual mentors of the adult population in addition to youngsters learning at schools. The lower primary teachers must have been aware of not only the traditional, but also of the modern economical and house trade competences, with which they helped the economical development of the folks' lifestyle and the education of the peasants in the countryside in those days. The curriculums delineate such a requirement system that reflects the reinforcement of an inclination to know the history, present, society and culture of a particular own region and the homeland, and through these, of the development of the connection to the homeland and of the emotion of patriotism.

The second period includes the decades following nationalization until the political changes having taken place at the end of the 1980s. Many serious alterations in the lower primary teachers' education were carried out, in addition to which, in view of the topic of this treatise, there were noticeable modifications in the curriculums as well. The main objective of the lower primary teachers' education was to train educated lower primary teachers for the grades of 1 to 4 of the primary schools who cherished and understood their profession and shared the Communist ideology and morale. This type of perspective can be identified in concern to the composition of the teaching materials of the school subjects. The local and folkloristic materials that had been so remarkable earlier vanished from the teaching materials of the school subjects. For instance, there was an ethnographical and folkloristic specialized society in the facultative subjects of the curriculum of the lower primary teachers' training institutions dating to 1959. The national and folkloristic and ethnographical knowledge shallowly emerged in the subjects of Hungarian children and teenager literature, agricultural studies, singing and drawing in the frame of the new national curriculums published in 1964, 1970, and 1973.

The educational framework of the lower primary teachers' training rose to the level of higher education in 1975, yet its structure of subjects did not include ethnography as an independent subject. The ultimate curriculum for primary schools prior to the political changes [in 1989] was last modified in 1978. The general objective and task designation of the school subjects further reflected the development of the students' dialectic, material world concept and the formation of the socialist communal behaviour. Ethnography related notions, nevertheless, emerged in detail in the teaching materials of the school subjects afterwards. As a consequence of the educational programmes issued at the end of the 1980s, a peculiar process set afoot that desired to devote an outstanding role to the ethnographical knowledge in the fields of knowledge communication and competence development.

The Act on public education ratified in 1993 subsequent to the political changes conveyed grave changes both in the education of the lower primary teachers and in public education. The National Core Curriculum was ratified in 1995. The teaching material of it, as a common requirement of the fields of erudition, put more emphasis on the local and folkloristic and ethnographical knowledge and material.

The school year of 1995/96 was a pivotal turning point in the education of the lower primary teachers. The four-year long training scheme, of which educational field harmonized with the National Core Curriculum, was launched; regretfully no relevant progress took place in view

of the main theme of this thesis. Owing to that the central curriculum of the lower primary teachers' training scheme was terminated in 1986, and the lower primary teachers' training institutions were authorized to elaborate their own local curriculums, the specialized four-year long training scheme could only provide recommendations for these institutions for the purpose of elaborating their own training programmes. National and folkloristic knowledge, as the common requirement of the National Core Curriculum, was insufficiently inserted into the teaching materials of subjects related to the various fields of erudition of the lower primary teachers' training institutions.

Having entered into effect in September 2001, the so-called Frame Curriculum implied positive progress in the field of public education as regards the emergence of the local and folkloristic and ethnographical content in the education scheme. As many as two curricular module subjects, of which content definitely encompassed a particular teaching material that was related to the major fields of the science of ethnography, were added to the list of school subjects to be taught at the primary schools.

However, the results of the questionnaire aided surveys linked to the introduction of the "A" and "B" versions of the national and folkloristic module subject well demonstrate that particular studies were not contained in fundamental education, neither in higher education, nor in the education of educators and lower primary teachers especially, in parallel with the introduction of the module subjects, which studies could have guaranteed the professional standard of the primary school education of these subjects.

The consecutive sections portray particular subjects that provide national and folkloristic and ethnographical knowledge with students majoring in lower primary school teaching studies at the lower primary teachers' training colleges of Hungary within the framework of the training scheme adapted to the four-year-long Bologna process.

Subjects that incorporate ethnographical knowledge within the structure of subjects applied by the lower primary teachers' training institutions in the country are overwhelmingly listed among the subjects of departments of Hungarian language and literature and of those maintaining singing and musical education. The prosaic genres of folklore and various fields of musical folklore traditions are considered as privileged ethnographical topics. Of the subjects of visual educational departments, we might find studies focusing on the dissemination of folk arts and the tangible culture. The topics of socio-ethnography, economical administration, tangible culture, craftsmanship, and nutrition are less stressed. Folkloristic regions, groups, ethnic groups (nationalities), the turning points of human life can

scarcely be found in the teaching material. A majority of these, even if mentioned only, is incorporated in the teaching material of primary school grades 1 to 4 and in the “A” and “B” versions of the module subjects of the national and folkloristic knowledge within the Frame Curriculum.

Rested on the data of avail, it can be stated that, at the colleges listed in this dissertation, students majoring in the erudition field of Man and Society will not participate in such a national and folkloristic training that could produce those professionally trained lower primary teachers who could properly teach whatsoever the “A” and “B” versions of the national and folkloristic knowledge modules of the Frame Curriculum referred to. The training institution in the city of Jászberény, where students opting for the above major can study ethnography in many semesters, might be an exception

Of the subjects of the lower primary teachers’ training institutions, except that in Jászberény, one cannot identify such subject educational subjects that would ensure the explanation of the national and folkloristic and tradition oriented knowledge content that is inserted in the teaching materials of the particular subjects with appropriate accentuation and methods.

Bear upon the materials collected, it can be stated that, in view of the common requirement of the “National and Folkloristic Knowledge” of the National Core Curriculum, ethnography and folklore related subjects emerge in the structure of subjects of the lower primary teachers’ training colleges, especially in association with particular fields of erudition. These subjects, on the other hand, are present in a low number only for a short period of time. Thence, in my opinion, they do not meet our expectation to propel the students majoring in lower primary teaching studies to acquire such ethnography related fundamental education, in possession of which they would be able to convey the ethnographical and folkloristic knowledge incorporated in the teaching material applied at primary schools to the primary school pupils.

It is our collective responsibility to convey those values, knowledge, conventions, and norms to the children growing up in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, which characterized the “Magyars” for centuries. The lower primary teachers and their training institutions have an outstanding role in this.

The consequent section presents the outcome of a questionnaire aided survey oriented to the level of ethnographical knowledge and the analysis of a few primary school textbooks as regards their ethnographical content.

I applied questionnaire aided survey in respect to the level of ethnographical knowledge of college students majoring in lower primary teaching. The students of the Szent István University Faculty of Applied and Professional Arts participated in the survey between 2000

and 2010, as well as further students of the lower primary teachers' training colleges in Baja, Budapest, Debrecen, Kecskemét, Nagykőrös, Nyíregyháza, Szarvas, and Szeged in the school year of 2009/2010. The survey was filled in by 1,077 students in total.

The average result of the questionnaire of the two test groups subject to survey is 42.45% in total. The average values of the knowledge levels of the partial sectors (intellectual, tangible, socio-ethnographical) are as follows:

- Intellectual ethnographical knowledge: 30.45%
- Tangible ethnographical knowledge: 52.65%
- Socio-ethnographical knowledge: 44.45%

It is a shocking result that the level of the intellectual ethnographical knowledge scarcely exceeds 30%, whilst the knowledge linked to this topic is powerfully present in the teaching material from the lower grades of primary school to the 9<sup>th</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> grades of the secondary school.

The levels of the tangible and socio-ethnographical knowledge barely exceed the foregoing rate, yet its average does not exceed or hardly exceeds 50%.

It is another thrilling fact how low rate of the schools, as the only source, shows in the field of ethnographical knowledge. Of the 1,077 students, only 33 in the two test groups subject to survey during the survey period defined their schools as their source of ethnographical knowledge.

These results should persuade the tutors and experts operating in the higher education of teacher training and in ethnography to contemplate over this matter profoundly. Numerous media have communicated that the conveyance of folk culture increasingly becomes the responsibility of the schools. The question is how if we do not prepare the (lower primary) teachers to be for this purpose? The results received indicate that there is much to be done to preserve the values inherited for centuries, as well as the tangible and intellectual products that have characterized our national and folkloristic culture to remain as the inherited and recognized values of the coming generations. The path that enables the conveyance of these values must be guaranteed. I believe that the education of lower primary teachers is an adequate method. There is an opportunity concealed in the teaching material of the fundamental subjects taught in the education of lower primary teachers and in the training in the field of erudition adjusted to the National Core Curriculum to alter the knowledge of the

folkloristic culture either being integrated into the concerned subject, or as an independent field of erudition into the integral part of the teaching material.

The analysis of the textbooks helped me demonstrate a minor cross-section of up to what extent the ethnographical material has been incorporated into the primary school textbooks. The assessment of their ethnographical content indicates that the ethnographical knowledge is in fact present in textbooks printed for the lower grades of primary schools for the subjects of environmental knowledge, technical (DIY) competences, singing and music, and Hungarian language and literature, more specifically according to the requirements of the National Core Curriculum and the Frame Curriculum.

The teaching material of the environmental knowledge encompasses customs and traditions linked to own local place of residence, as well as other regions, ethnic groups, and nationalities of the country. The theoretical knowledge and best practices connected to minor craftsmanship are noticeably present in the technical (DIY) subject. Of course, the musical folklore genres dominate the teaching material of singing and music (musical folklore children play songs, folksongs, folk music reviews, musical and singing materials associated with prominent days, etc.). The teaching materials of all three subjects contain particular customs connected to the prominent days of the calendar in view of the different ages' peculiarities.

The teaching material of specific chapters of the reading books for primary school grades 1 to 4 published by the Nemzeti Tankönyvkiadó [Hungarian Schoolbook Press] for the subject of Hungarian language and literature is based on Hungarian prosaic folklore genres, and it, up to a certain extent, gives a review of the prosaic folklore traditions of other nationalities and folks with special regard to folk (fairy) tales. Of course, the approach to this ethnographical content is adjusted to the objective&task system and concept of the concerned school subject. The methodological review of the textbook clusters (see appendix) suitably delineates that, in many cases, the ethnography related material represents the backbone of the teaching material to be instructed, yet neither the textbooks, nor the tasks in the workbooks advance the quality processing, the understanding, and the thorough study of the concerned ethnographical theme. In knowledge of the foregoing, it must be underlined that the lower primary teachers' training institutions have an outstanding responsibility in this area, and they also must guarantee a more concentrated ethnographical knowledge conveyance for the materials of the fields of erudition in the training scheme.

The results of the preceding chapters and content units adequately demonstrate that the ethnographical content has been incorporated in the structure of subjects and training scheme of the lower primary teachers' higher educational institutions in a randomized and ruffled manner. The sequels of the questionnaire aided survey adequately illustrate that the ethnographical competence and information of the lower primary teachers to be badly need relevant support in this area. In knowledge of the foregoing and relying upon my experiences acquired in the course of my tutorial career, the ultimate section of my dissertation introduces a package of subjects elaborated by myself for the lower primary teachers' training colleges. When perfecting and refining the aforementioned package of subjects, my fundamental objective was to designate such knowledge and knowledge content that are indispensable for the education of ethnographical elements in the primary school teaching material. These have a critical capacity in the reinforcement of our "Magyar" identity, and they also call general attention to values that constitute integral part of our general erudition.

## **4. List of publications**

### **4.1. The author's publications published in this topic**

A hagyományismeret tanítása [How to Teach the Knowledge of Traditions]

In: Tantárgy-Pedagógiai Kutatások [something like Subject Educational Research]. (Edited by Mária Albertné Herbszt). Baja, 2005, pp. 201-207

Főiskolai hallgatók néprajzi ismeretei [The Ethnographical Knowledge of College Students]

In: Honismeret [something like The Knowledge of the Homeland], 2006, Vol. XXXIV.; Copy 1; pp. 24-28

A népi kultúra helye és szerepe a globalizálódó világban [The Place and Role of Folk Culture in Globalization]

In: Globalizáció és fenntartható fejlődés [Globalization and Sustainable Growth]. (Edited by Józsefné Varga). Győr, 2006; pp. 544-551

[Options to Convey the Values of Hungarian Folk Culture and its Exigency in the Education of Lower Primary Teachers]

In: Hagyomány és fejlődés [Tradition and Development]. (Edited by Ildikó Lőrincz). Győr, 2007; pp. 237-244

[The Options of Teaching the Knowledge of Traditions and its Educational Efficaciousness]

In: VIII. Tantárgy- Pedagógiai Nemzetközi Tudományos Konferencia [something like 8<sup>th</sup> Subject Educational International Scientific Conference]. (Edited by Sándor Attila Tóth). Baja, 2010; pp. 451-456

### **4.2. Other publications:**

Népi játékok [Folk Games]

In: Szülőföldünk a Jászság. Helytörténeti olvasókönyv [Our Homeland, the Jászság. Local Knowledge Reading Book]. (Edited by Edit Bathó - Izabella Papp). Jászberény, 2011; pp. 302-309

Népdalok, balladák [Folk Songs and Ballads]

In: Szülőföldünk a Jászság. Helytörténeti olvasókönyv [Our Homeland, the Jászság. Local Knowledge Reading Book]. (Edited by Edit Bathó - Izabella Papp). Jászberény, 2011; pp. 257-266

A Jászság adventi jeles napjai és szokásai [The Prominent Days and Customs of the Advent in the Jászság Region]

In: Redemptio, 2007; Vol. XIV., Copy 6, pp. 6-8

A Jászság nagyböjti szokásai [The Customs of the Jászság Region during the Period of Lent]

In: Redemptio, 2007; Vol. XIV., Copy 2, pp. 3-7

A Jászság népi gyermekjáték gyűjteményeiről [about the Folk Children Game Collections of the Jászság Region]

In: Ethnica, 2002; Vol. IV., Copy 2, pp. 75-76

István Molnár: Népi játékok Jászszentandrásról [Folk Games from Jászszentandrás]  
Sent to press and essay attached by Klára V. Juhász Nyitó  
Jászsági Füzetek [Booklet of the Jászság Region], Vol. 40. Jászberény, 2007

István Molnár: Adj király katonát. Népi gyermekjátékok Jászszentandráson. [something like  
“Your Majesty! Give us a soldier!”. Folk Games in Jászszentandrás]  
Sent to press and introduction and essay attached by Klára Juhász Ny.  
Jászsági Füzetek [Booklet of the Jászság Region], Vol. 24. Jászberény, 1995

Edit Bathó: Népi méhészkedés a Jászságban című kötetéről [about her book titled Folk  
Apiculture in the Jászság Region]  
In: Redemptio, 2007. Vol. XIV., Copy 6, pp. 22-23

István Molnár: Népi játékok Jászszentandrásról című kötetéről [about his book titled Folk  
Games from Jászszentandrás]  
In: Redemptio, 2007. Vol. XIV., Copy 5, pp. 21

Jászok és kunok a magyarok között. Ünnepi tanulmánykötet Bánkiné Molnár Erzsébet  
tiszteletére című kötetéről [about Jassics and Cumans among Hungarians. Special Volume of  
Essays and Studies in honour of Erzsébet Bánkiné Molnár]  
In: Redemptio, 2006. Vol. XIII., Copy 5, pp. 16-18

László Selmeczi: A Jászok eredete és középkori műveltsége című kötetéről [about his book  
titled The Origins and Medieval Erudition of the Jassics]  
In: Redemptio, 2005. Vol. XII., Copy 6, pp. 14-15

János Botka: Jász-Nagykun-Szolnok megye jelképei című kötetéről [about his book titled The  
Symbols of Jász-Nagykun-Szolnok County]  
In: Redemptio, 2000. Vol. VII., Copy 6, pp. 8-9

Erzsébet Bánkiné Molnár: Redemptusok című kötetéről [about her book titled Redemptusok]  
In: Redemptio, 2000. Vol. VII., Copy 4, pp. 16-17