



Practical Education in Secondary Educational Institutions for Teachers' Training

Béla MOLNÁR

molnar.bela@nyme.hu

(University of Western Hungary Berzsenyi Dániel Teacher Training College, Szombathely, Hungary)

Received: 27.07.2016; Accepted: 30.09.2016

Abstract: *Between 1950 and 1959, teacher training in secondary schools meant an education to last for four years followed by a specified final exam and a practice period of one year. Trainee teachers were subsequently expected to take a qualifying exam. The objective of the investigation is to present and analyse the forms and the documents related to the regulation in practical training. In the course of the essay we will go into details concerning the difficulties and problems in organising practical training as well as the issue whether the vocational training allowed to contribute to develop trainee teachers' expertise. The use of primary sources such as curricula and regulations were included during the investigation.*

Keywords: history of education, teachers' training, Hungarian education

Regulation of Practical Training Based on Curricula

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

Table 1. Lesson Plan of Teacher Training Schools, 1951

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

(Source: Curriculum for Teacher Training Schools, 1951)

Process of Practical Training

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

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

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

In training schools, subject teachers, teachers of Methodology and primary school teachers at practising schools all worked together in unity

and agreement and it was the main endeavour of all of them to involve trainees in educating and teaching children.

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

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

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

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

The primary school teacher, the subject teachers and the teacher of methodology all participated in the lesson. In the course of the preparation – irrespective of the fact whether it was the preparation of a demonstration lesson or a lesson to be held by the trainee – the objective and material of the teaching, the main didactic tasks and their order all had to be clarified in detail, i.e. they had to be presented, the necessary and possible methods and tools had to be planned, etc. First preparation lessons were mainly prepared by the primary school teachers and the teachers of the practising school, later they ended up in only confining themselves to telling the most necessary pieces of information related to objectives and materials thus the whole process of elaborating was left to the trainees. The principle of gradual and orderly progress prevailed in both the measure and details of the elaboration. Those preparing the plan initially had to strive after completeness: they had to write the whole imagined content of the planned lesson, its course, and besides the primary school teacher's text and questions also the pupils' possible reactions and answers. The precisely revised plan was several pages, corrected by the mentors and they told or wrote the trainees their advice. In the process of practising, the detailed plan was followed by ample drafts, later by shorter lesson plans.

Initially, practical teaching was almost considered as a high day in trainees' life but as time passed by it also meant an important event. It was preceded by thorough preparation and it was followed by detailed attention.

In the lesson of assessment, first the trainee's self-assessment took place followed by the critical remarks made by other trainees, the primary school

teacher, the teacher of methodology and finally by the group leader (in most cases a teacher of pedagogy or psychology). The conclusion of the practical teaching was drawn and established, pro and con features were made aware of, shortcomings and problems were analysed and corrected with potential solutions, pieces of advice to make them avoidable later.

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

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

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

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

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

Standardisation of practical training

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

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

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