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Textbooks on history of education in Hungary since 1990

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Textbooks on History of Education in Hungary since 1990

Abstract

In diesem Beitrag werden ungarische Schulbücher zur Bildungsgeschichte analysiert, die nach dem Fall des Kommunismus veröffentlicht wurden. In den frühen 1990er-Jahren wurden mehrere neue Lehrbücher publiziert. Zu Beginn der 2000er-Jahre wurde die Verwendung eines einzigen Lehrbuchs dominant. Die Lehrbücher brachen zwar mit der Tradition der kommunistischen Geschichtsschreibung und fügten neue Ansätze und Themen hinzu, doch weisen sie auch viele traditionelle Merkmale auf. Wir argumentieren, dass die Lehrbücher dazu neigen, die pädagogischen Aspekte zu vernachlässigen. Dies könnte dazu beigetragen haben, dass der Stellenwert der Bildungsgeschichte in der ungarischen Hochschulbildung gesunken ist.

1. Historiography of education in Hungary since 1990

Historiography of Education¹ emerged as a subject of teacher training in Germany. Friedrich Heinrich Christian Schwarz published the first textbook on the history of education in 1813 (Schwarz, 1813). The *Geschichte der Erziehung* was the third volume of his *Erziehungslehre*. His textbook was followed by such influential ones as Karl Friedrich von Raumer's *Geschichte der Pädagogik* (von Raumer, 1843a, 1843b, 1847, 1854), Karl Schmid's *Encyklopädie des gesamten Erziehungs- und Unterrichtswesens* (Schmid, 1859–1873) and *Die Geschichte der Pädagogik in weltgeschichtlicher Entwicklung und im organischen Zusammenhange mit dem Culturleben der Völker* by Karl Schmidt (Schmidt, 1860–1862).

These textbooks were widely used in Germany and served as inspiration for textbooks on the history of education all over Central and East Europe. Moreover, they influenced French, British, and American textbooks. German educators established the historiography of education as a field of study and a subject in teacher training.

Daniel Tröhler analysed German and French textbooks on the history of education from the 19th century. He found that they show common characteristics:

“The recurrent ‘paradigm’ of this historiography of education has a number of characteristics, including priority of moral-educational intention over scientific quality, history divided into epochs, emphasis on individual figures in education, dominated by men, preference for Lutheran Protestantism and with this, assertion of the national superiority of German education from 1800.

¹ When written in capital letters, History/Historiography of Education refers to the field of research or the subject in university teacher training programmes and various other higher education courses. Otherwise, we use it as the past of education.

It is difficult to determine that extent to which these characteristics are interdependent, and it must also be remembered that until recently, only men wrote the historical accounts. Nevertheless, an attempt at an overview of the diverse histories of education reveals how great the stability in the historiography itself is, the cornerstones on which it is built, the extent to which it hands down certain *topoi*, how frequently new histories to a large extent merely copy the older historiography” (Tröhler, 2004, p. 369).

These characteristics are still dominant, although there have been profound changes in the historiography of education in recent decades.

In Hungary, the History of Education² began to develop rapidly only in the second half of the 19th century with the development of teacher training institutions. In the 19th century, History of Education became one of the most important (if not the most important) subjects in teacher training, along with didactics and educational theory. The reason for the importance of History of Education is the same as in the case of historiography. History of Education provided the historical legacy of current educational theories, practices, and school systems.

However, in the 19th century and for the most part of the 20th century, there was an important difference between the different types of teacher training. While primary teaching (for children aged 6 to 12) had a low prestige, like a blue-collar profession, secondary teaching was a highly respected academic profession.

Primary teacher training prepared students for the demands of mass education. It therefore had many practical elements and lasted for a shorter period. Their textbooks mainly described the history of primary education and methodology. The training of secondary school teachers was more theoretical, with little (or no) practical elements. Their textbooks consisted mainly of the history of educational theories.

In the 19th and in the first half of the 20th century, the training of elementary teachers took place at a secondary level and became part of the higher education only in the second half of the 20th century. Today, all types of teacher training take place at universities. Therefore, the textbooks we analyse in the following chapters are written for and used by adults. However, we will argue that the most widely used textbooks are not tailored to adult users’ needs.

Despite these important differences between the training of elementary and secondary teachers, the characteristics described by Tröhler could be found in textbooks for both types of training. The established set of stories is called the canon. The historical canon has a great consistency and a similar structure. As Tröhler noted, classical figures (heroes) play a major role in the canon. These classical figures represent the most important moral and professional values that teachers should have. The eternal educational tasks that teachers must deal with in schools are also presented through the works of these prominent educators. In addition, the description of their lives and activities contains not only bibliographical elements, but also the accepted and rejected methods that teachers should be aware of.

In his study, Heinz-Elmar Tenorth, like Tröhler, draws attention to the prominent role of the so-called ‘classics). The ten most frequently mentioned classics in German textbooks on the history of education are Rousseau, Pestalozzi, Comenius, Herbart, Locke, Schleier-

² “History of Education” is written with capital first letters when it refers to the correspondent academic sub-discipline of Educational Sciences.

macher, Fröbel, Francke, Kerschensteiner and Herder. Another study, which looked at which 20th century classics were most frequently quoted, produced the following list: Bernfeld, Dewey, Litt, Nohl, Roth, Key, Freire, Neill, Horkheimer, Adorno and Makarenko. Tenorth points out that none of the pre-Comenius classics were included in the first list, but that there is a predominance of names from the 19th and 20th centuries associated with classical German pedagogy and reform pedagogy (Tenorth, 2003).

In Hungary, History of Education became an independent and distinct field of academic research in the 1930s. Its enrichment continued after the Second World War, and History of Education remained an important subject of teacher training during the period of communist rule (Szabó et al., 2022).

After the fall of the socialist regime in 1990, History of Education had to reinvent itself and adapt to the new circumstances. As early as in 1992, a conference on the renewal of Hungarian educational history was held. Alongside the ‘old generation’ of researchers and authors, a new generation of educational historians appeared on the scene. They later became prominent academic figures and textbook authors. This ‘generational change’ modernised the content and methodology of Hungarian educational history.

These changes have led to an enrichment of the topics that historians of education have studied and the methods they have used in their research. New research topics included the history of childhood, the history of educational science, the history of women’s education, the history of new educational and life reform movements, and historical sociology of education. Iconography and content analysis could also be mentioned as new methodologies (Gulczyńska et al., 2023). At the same time, however, Hungarian educational historians had paid less attention to theoretical questions, to the international debates on post-modern historiography and to some new approaches (e.g. transnationalism).

2. Textbooks on the history of education since 1990

The demand for the reinvention of History of Education finally led to the publication of new textbooks from the early 1990s. Although some publishers reprinted socialist textbooks for a few years after the change of regime, they did not stay in fashion and disappeared from higher education by the middle of the decade.

We could identify the following textbooks as the most widely used.

- (1) Pukánszky, B. (1991). *Neveléstörténet [History of Education]* (Vol. 1.). Budapest: Tankönyvkiadó.
- (2) Pukánszky, B. (1992). *Neveléstörténet [History of Education]* (Vol. 2.). Szeged: Juhász Gyula Tanárképző Főiskola (JGYTF).
- (3) Pukánszky, B. & Németh, A. (1992). *Neveléstörténet [History of Education]* (Vol. 3.). Szeged: Juhász Gyula Tanárképző Főiskola (JGYTF).
- (4) Pukánszky, B. & Németh, A. (1994, 1995, 1996, 1997, 1998, 1999). *Neveléstörténet [History of Education]* (6 Volumes). Budapest: Tankönyvkiadó.
- (5) Fehér, E. (1995, 1997, 2002). *Az oktatás és nevelés története [History of Education and Training]*. Budapest: Tankönyvkiadó.
- (6) Németh, A. (1997). *Bevezetés a nevelés elméleti és történeti kérdéseibe [Introduction to the Theory and History of Education]*. Budapest: Planétás Kiadó.

- (7) Horváth, L., Pornói, I. & Schablauer, Z. (1997). *A nevelés történeti és elméleti alapjai* [*Historical and Theoretical Foundations of Education*]. Kaposvár: Csokonai Vitéz Mihály Tanítóképző Főiskola.
- (8) Mészáros, I., Németh, A. & Pukánszky, B. (1999, 2000, 2001, 2002, 2003, 2005). *Bevezetés a pedagógia és az iskoláztatás történetébe* [Introduction to the History of Pedagogy and Schooling]. Budapest: Osiris Kiadó.
- (9) Sávai, J. (2000.) *Neveléstörténet* [*History of Education*]. Szeged: Agapé.
- (10) Horváth, L. & Pornói, I. (2002). *Neveléstörténet* [*History of Education*]. Nyíregyháza: Bessenyei Könyvkiadó.
- (11) Horváth, L. & Pornói, I. (2008). *A nevelés probléma- és intézménytörténete* [The History of Educational Problems and Institutions]. Nyíregyháza: Krúdy.
- (12) Albert, B.G. (2011). *A nevelés történeti és elméleti alapjai* [*Historical and Theoretical Foundations of Education*]. Kaposvár: Kaposvári Egyetem.

Some conclusions can be drawn from analysing the list. The most important authors are Béla Pukánszky and András Németh. They have written textbooks separately (1., 2., and 6.) and co-authored the most influential textbooks (3., 4., 6., and 8.). (We will discuss these issues in the next chapter.) They can clearly be identified as the key players in the textbook market in this area.

There are also other textbooks (7., 10., and 11.) written by the same authors (László Horváth and Imre Pornói) with different titles, but with little difference in content.

I could not find any data on the use of textbooks written by authors not included in the previous two groups. We can assume that they served a special purpose in a local teacher training institution. For example, the textbook by János Sávai (9.) is a Catholic textbook and was intended for use in the teacher training programmes of a Catholic college.

Like the list of authors, the list of publishers also consists of only a few names. Tankönyvkiadó [literally translated: Textbook Publisher] had a long tradition of publishing textbooks for both public and higher education. Osiris was founded in 1994 and quickly became one of the most influential publishers of textbooks in the humanities and social sciences. In Hungary, there has never been strong competition in the market for higher education textbooks. The less popular books on the list were typically published by higher education institutions.

Although in the following chapter we will focus on the textbook that has been most widely used in different teacher training programmes, it is important to note some common features of the textbooks. They break with the ideological legacy of the socialist era and present the history of education in what can be described as traditional language, context, and content. It is beyond the scope of this study to describe them in detail, but in some cases strong links and even actual textual connections can be found with textbooks that were published in the first half of the 20th century.

It is interesting to note that almost all History of Education textbooks were printed in a relatively short period of time, in the first 20 years after the change of regime. Only one textbook was published during the last 15 years. (We will try to explain this phenomenon in a later chapter.)

3. 'The standard textbook'

As mentioned above, the most influential textbooks were written by Béla Pukánszky and András Németh. The first edition of their textbook was published in 1994. Pukánszky was an associate professor at the University of Szeged at the time. Németh was a lecturer at Eötvös Loránd University in Budapest. They were not only textbook authors, but also pioneers in the introduction of some new research topics, such as the history of childhood, the history of women's education, new approaches to the history of progressive education, the history of life reform movements, and research on professionalisation. Because of their pioneering role in renewing the historiography of education in Hungary and in organising the Hungarian research community, they became two of the most important Hungarian historians of education in the last 30 years.

They later revised their book and added a third author, István Mészáros. He belonged to an older generation and was (one of) the most prominent Hungarian historian(s) of education from the 1960s. He was also a mentor of Pukánszky and Németh in the 1980s. We have analysed the last edition of the book (8. in the previous list). We must mention that they edited a *Collection of Sources* [*Neveléstörténet. Szöveggyűjtemény*] that accompanied the textbook, too. They also co-authored a book, *The Problem History of Pedagogy* [*A pedagógia problémátörténete*]. These books became popular and were widely used in various branches of teacher training.

The *Introduction to the History of Pedagogy and Schooling* [*Bevezetés a pedagógia és az iskoláztatás történetébe*] became the standard textbook in the field of History of Education. The course descriptions of the various Hungarian universities and colleges are hardly accessible, so we were not able to conduct research on them at this stage. Therefore, we relied on publicly available descriptions of BA, MA, and various teacher training courses. We concluded that the use of this textbook was either required or recommended in each of these courses. Its popularity extends beyond these programmes, being used in other BA, MA, and PhD courses. It is correct to say, partly based on personal experience, that the textbook has become synonymous with History of Education for a wide audience, making it 'the standard textbook'.

The aim of the textbook is to introduce people to the history of education. As the authors explain:

"In our book we cover the most important events in the history of education. We trace the most significant moments in the development and history of educational institutions (especially schools) and examine the ideas and proposals of prominent philosophers and teachers on education and how their own work influenced the educational practice of their time. In addition, we try to present the concept of man and the child in successive historical periods. Our aim is to provide the reader with a guide for further exploration of the history of education. This will help to answer several pedagogical questions that have arisen time and again, with different answers for each era and culture" (Mészáros et al., 2000, p. 13; transl. from Hungarian to English by A.N.).

The textbook is divided into three main chapters: I. The historical roots of modern pedagogy, II. The emergence and development of modern pedagogy, and III. One Thousand Years of the Hungarian School.

The first chapter covers topics such as Ancient Eastern Cultures, Greek Education, Rome, Early Christian Education, Medieval Education, Renaissance and Humanism, Reforma-

tion and Counter-Reformation, the Age of Enlightenment and German Philosophical Pedagogy. The second main chapter describes the new educational movements of the 19th century, the evolution of pedagogical thought, the development of pedagogy as an independent science, the various stages in the development of progressive education, and the main trends in theoretical pedagogy. The third chapter deals with the history of schooling and pedagogical thinking in Hungary.

The textbook contains descriptions of many pedagogical classics: Quintilian, Guarino da Verona, da Feltre, Erasmus, Vives, Rabelais, Montaigne, Luther, Melancthon, Locke, Rousseau, Pestalozzi, Kant, Fichte, Hegel, Schleiermacher, Fröbel, Herbart, Don Bosco, Kolping, Comte, Spencer, Trapp, Milde, Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, Bergson, James, Dewey, Claparède, Montessori, Decroly, Ferrière, Kerschensteiner, Freinet, Parkhurst, Petersen, Dilthey, Spranger, Natorp, Foerster, Mead, Talcott, Tessedik,³ Lubrich, Kármán, Fináczy, Weszely, Prohászka, Felméri, Schneller, Imre, Mitrovics and Karácsony. Approximately 30 percent of the textbook describes these persons.

It should be noted, however, that the authors do not discuss each classic in the same detail, and most of them are discussed only briefly. The authors who are discussed in most details are Locke, Rousseau, Pestalozzi, Herbart, and Dewey, with the textbook dedicating at least four pages to each of them.

At this point, we can refer to Tröhler's (2004, p. 369) findings. He argues that the main characteristics of textbooks on the history of education in the 19th century were the priority of moral-educational intention over scientific quality, the division of history into epochs and the emphasis on individual figures in education, predominantly men. Some of these characteristics can (partly) be seen in the textbook. Although the individual figures are not dominant in the story, they occupy a considerable space. Also, as we could see earlier, the authors discuss the history of education in chronological order.

However, *The Problem History of Education* [*A pedagógia problémátörténete*] mentioned above discusses some key 'problems' (also known as issues) in the history of education. These 'problems' include an anthropological study of the history of ideas about human nature, and chapters on the history of childhood and the family in Europe, the changing role of the teacher throughout history, and the history of classrooms and teaching methods. This book, although not as widely used, is a good companion to the textbook.

Although it has some traditional features, it is worth mentioning that the *Introduction to the History of Pedagogy and Schooling* [*Bevezetés a pedagógia és az iskoláztatás történetébe*] is more modern than its predecessors. Firstly, after the ideologically imbued textbooks of the socialist era, this textbook (and its previous versions) adopted a 'non-ideological' approach. It does not contain all the simplified and distorted Marxist ideas and terminologies that were an essential part of the textbooks between 1945 and 1989. The authors have reconnected the history of Hungarian education to the Western context that prevailed before the Second World War.

The authors also introduced new themes into their textbooks. Pukánszky published a monograph on the history of childhood (Pukánszky, 2001) and included the subject in the textbook. This inclusion of the history of childhood is unique not only in Hungary but is hardly found anywhere else. Another notable change was their approach to the history of the New Education/Progressive Education. They broke with the previously dominant explanations

³ The following ones are Hungarian educators.

and gave an interpretation of the phenomena based on the most modern Western literature. They also included the latest findings on the history of Hungarian progressive education. These are only two examples of the modernisation of the materials; the textbook contains many subtler, but important improvements.

In our opinion, *Introduction to the History of Pedagogy and Schooling* is a high-quality handbook/monograph that is widely used as a textbook in Hungarian higher education. Of course, this statement raises the question: What is a textbook, especially a textbook for adults? Is it a book written as a textbook and/or a book used as a textbook? From a practical point of view, we call the books described above textbooks, but we must admit that they usually do not have all the characteristics of a 'real' textbook.

The history of textbooks (Sammler, 2018) and the history of textbook research (Fuchs & Henne, 2018) offer various interpretations of the term 'textbook'. The most traditional understanding is that a textbook is an educational medium written for and used primarily in the classroom. With the emergence of new approaches to learning, expectations of textbooks have changed. They are expected not only to disseminate knowledge but also to help students to learn.

Textbooks for adults, especially for university students, are usually used by learners who may study and learn at least partly independently. A 'real' textbook in higher education should take the needs and circumstances of university students into account. If we look at the criteria of whether textbooks support independent learning, the History of Education textbooks analysed, as mentioned earlier, do not meet this criterion. We argue that the *Introduction to the History of Pedagogy and Schooling* has some features that are largely traditional. Despite the inclusion of new topics and approaches, it focuses heavily on the history of ideas and the classics of educational thinking. It also contains no pictures or illustrations, and only a handful of charts and tables, but this may be due to printing costs which limited the possibilities. The text also contains no summaries, no questions and the language and content are not tailored to contemporary students. It structures the content according to historical periods rather than learning units. It tends to neglect pedagogical aspects of the subject, which may limit the learnability of the textbook.

Of course, we do not want to blame the authors. The characteristics described above are the result of a combination of various factors, including the authors' intentions, the more traditional notion of learning in the 1990s, the interests of publishers, or the traditions of Hungarian academic textbook publishing, in which didactic aspects are often neglected.⁴ However, we argue that these characteristics of History of Education textbooks contribute to the decline of the discipline.

4. The status of the History of Education in Hungarian higher education

The devaluation of the History of Education in teacher training programmes is a common tendency (Tröhler, 2006) for Eastern and Western Europe – it can also be observed in England (McCulloch, 2012), Finland (Rantala, 2012), Switzerland (Hofmann, 2014) and France (Caspard & Rogers, 2012).

⁴ Although there are several textbook researchers in Hungary, research on university textbooks has not been a major focus of interest so far.

“There is no doubt: History of Education as a distinct area of academic research on education no longer plays the dominant role that it took on at the time of its emergence, the mid-nineteenth century. Its decreasing importance is connected with both external and internal factors. From the external perspective, public expectations towards the genre History of Education declined, especially in the context of teacher education. And within history of education research, there was no significant success in adapting to these changes, that is, in finding new paradigms that would find greater resonance. Up to today, the dominant impression that this form of history of education leaves is that not only does it deal with the past but also the very way in which it does so itself belongs to the past. [...] The historiography of education did not succeed – in academia or in education policy – in becoming a fundamental research approach to the field of education alongside the philosophy of education and ahistorical empirical statistical research (dominant today)” (Tröhler, 2006, p. 5).

Hungarian historians of education have shared some similar experiences with their Western colleagues. In the last two decades, the History of Education has rapidly lost ground in Hungarian higher education. The situation is ambivalent. History of Education is still an important subject in various educational programmes, such as the BA & MA in Education and the teacher training for special needs. There are five different PhD programmes with sub-programmes in History of Education. At the same time, however, History of Education has been excluded from teacher training in many universities during a recent reform of higher education.

Since 2013, Hungarian higher education has moved from a two-cycle teacher training to a unicycle teacher training. This made it necessary to revise the teacher training curricula. The transition has drastically worsened the position of the History of Education. While the introduction of the Bologna two-cycle teacher education explicitly included the requirement to develop a historical perspective in teacher education, the documents for the unicycle teacher education lack this requirement, which some higher education institutions saw as a good opportunity to remove the History of Education from the content of teacher education.

However, the voices against the role of History of Education are not new:

“The traditional teacher training curriculum encompasses three broad areas, one of which, the History of Education, is not a compulsory subject in several EU countries. It is highly debatable whether this increasingly voluminous subject area should remain part of the compulsory curriculum of the new shorter training programme. [...] The History of Education appears in various incarnations in master’s curricula. The history of educational institutions and childhood is part of the foundational stage of teacher training. The history of different subject areas and even youth movements are taught in separate courses later on. For the time being only one of these, usually the traditional, chronological history of pedagogy, is compulsory” (Kárpáti, 2009, p. 207).

The declining role of educational history in Hungarian higher education is closely linked to the weakening of the academic position of educational historians. Researchers, research groups and institutions working in the field of empirical educational sciences and/or psychology have gained more academic recognition and consequently more power in the last decade. The main reasons for their achievements are their high-ranking international publications, their active academic life, and their integration into international research organisations.

At the same time, an introspection should be carried out to identify the internal professional reasons that, in line with international trends, have led to the gradual loss of prestige

of the History of Education, which has accelerated in recent years. One such reason is the ineffectiveness of educational history writing in responding to the paradigm shift(s) in educational history that have surrounded it.

In recent decades, the main paradigm in educational research has been a social science approach based on empirical methods. And although there are serious criticisms of this paradigm, Hungarian educational historiography has two important things to do in relation to it. On the one hand, it should be emphasised that a historical-anthropological approach to education is a valid way of researching pedagogical phenomena that is on a par with the empirical approach. On the other hand, research topics that are relevant for researchers using empirical methodology should also be identified.

At the same time, the role of textbooks in History of Education should be addressed and rethought. Textbooks can be used not only as teaching aids, but also as summaries of the findings of a discipline. As we have seen in the previous chapters, many Hungarian textbooks on the history of education follow a traditional layout and approach, and thus do not reflect the methodological and thematic richness that has characterised the last 30 years of Hungarian educational history writing. Some of them give an outdated picture of the current state of the discipline. Therefore, we argue that these textbooks contribute to the decline of the discipline.

5. Questions and conclusions

The statements made in the previous chapter raise two questions. One might ask: If current textbooks on the history of education lag behind the current state of the discipline, why have there been no new textbooks on the history of education in recent decades? Although it is impossible to give a precise answer, there are at least three intertwined reasons for the lack of new textbooks. We can assume that the success of previous textbooks, especially the *Introduction to the History of Education and Schooling*, has discouraged potential authors from writing new ones. What is more, the scientometric practices of universities and colleges do not always reward textbook authors adequately. Developing and writing a textbook is a tedious and time-consuming task, yet publishing an article, especially an international one, could contribute more to the advancement of the institution and the research community. This may discourage researchers from writing textbooks. Finally, changes in publishing in Hungary also work against textbook publishing. On the one hand, it is an international phenomenon that the role of mother tongue publications is declining. On the other hand, there is no real profit for publishers in the Hungarian market to publish a textbook that is unlikely to sell in large numbers. As mentioned earlier, there was no significant competition in the textbook market, so publishers could not become major agents in this field.

Another question is whether more modern textbooks could help the History of Education. As mentioned above, the paradigmatic changes in teacher training have made History of Education seemingly irrelevant. The underlying question, therefore, is whether History of Education can facilitate the professional development of teachers. We would argue that the traditional History of Education, which focuses on the chronological presentation of events and the history of schooling and educational ideas, may not be useful for teacher candidates. However, since every contemporary educational phenomenon has its historical

context, understanding this context would help teachers to understand their environment and thus to practice more successfully.

At the same time, we also argue that significant changes could be achieved by rethinking some of the fundamental issues in the history of education and adding new topics to textbooks. Some of these key issues could be the concept of power, the role of social status in education, the history of knowledge production, and the history of marginalised and oppressed social groups. And some of the new topics could be the social history of schooling and teachers, the history of professionalisation, the history of the feminisation of the teaching profession, educationalisation, the grammar of schooling, the history of everyday school practices and rituals, the history of educational policy, and the history of textbooks and educational media.

We believe that enriching textbooks with such issues and topics could contribute to raising the status of History of Education and to making teacher education more useful.

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