

Trends in changing history teaching in Hungary (1990–2020)

ÁGNES FISCHER-DÁRDAI¹ and JÓZSEF KAPOSÍ^{2*} 

¹ Pécsi Tudományegyetem, Pécs, Hungary

² Pázmány Péter Catholic University, Budapest, Hungary

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ABSTRACT

Our study seeks to outline the defining trends and phenomena of Hungarian public education and teacher training – with a focus on Hungarian history teaching – between 1990 and 2020. The authors were, on various levels and to various degrees, participants, and at times influential actors, in the processes presented in this study. From this, and as a consequence of their convictions, they advocate the aspect of continuity in the interest of maintaining Hungarian traditions, as well as the perspectives of renewal in the interest of implementing new Hungarian and foreign thinking, approaches and innovations.

This mosaic-like overview seeks to outline the main pillars of the context of Hungarian history teaching with the use of fundamental professional literature from the period on pedagogy and history didactics. The focus of the study is history teaching, and for a better understanding of its processes we highlight some important policy decisions and documents. We wish to show the education policy, pedagogical and educational-methodological environment in which the journal articles that provide the backbone of the volume were formulated.

KEYWORDS

historical thinking, historical literacy, textbook research, content regulatory document, matura exam

* Corresponding author. E-mail: kaposij@gmail.com

The paper does not target teacher training on college level, since this form of training ceased after the introduction of the unified teacher-training system of the Bologna Reform. The 2013 modification of the Hungarian Higher Education Act allowed college-level training, however the rate of history-teacher students in this training form is under 10%. Most of the students prefer and choose university level training and get a degree which enables graduates to teach in secondary level schools and provides wider opportunities in the labor market.

INTRODUCTORY THOUGHTS

Our study seeks to outline the defining trends and phenomena of Hungarian public education and teacher training – with a focus on Hungarian history teaching – between 1990 and 2020. The authors were, on various levels and to various degrees, participants, and at times influential actors, in the processes presented in this study. From this, and as a consequence of their convictions, they advocate the aspect of continuity in the interest of maintaining Hungarian traditions, as well as the perspectives of renewal in the interest of implementing new Hungarian and foreign thinking, approaches and innovations.

This mosaic-like overview seeks to outline the main pillars of the context of Hungarian history teaching with the use of fundamental professional literature from the period on pedagogy and history didactics. The focus of the study is history teaching, and for a better understanding of its processes we highlight some important policy decisions and documents. We wish to show the education policy, pedagogical and educational-methodological environment in which the journal articles that provide the backbone of the volume were formulated.

BACKGROUND ON EDUCATIONAL GOVERNANCE

In Hungary, from the mid-1980s – still framed in the Kádár era – an education and educational governance system started to take shape. Governance that was earlier mainly of a political perspective, was gradually replaced with the preparation and implementation of a policy that was rather professional. One of the results was the 1985 Education Act which overrode the earlier centrally determined regulation and cleared the way for various experimental schools and the application of alternative pedagogical solutions (Báthory, 2001; Gázsó, 1988; Halász, 2001; Kozma, 1990; Nagy, 2012).

After the 1989/90 change of system, education with a pluralist worldview became a civil right and the state's monopoly on establishing and running schools ceased, creating the opportunity for the expansion of church and foundation schools. The education system was decentralized to a significant degree. The freedom to establish schools and to choose schools became commonplace, schools' professional autonomy was expanded, as was the rights of teaching bodies, students and parents to seek consensus and air their opinions (Halász and Lannert, 1996). The 1993 Public Education Act¹ codified the results of this process of restructuring and reform as well as the changes to school structure, which had in the meantime split up and become selective (eight- and six-grade gymnasiums), as well as ended the state monopoly on textbook authorship and publication. Professional support and oversight bodies (e.g. the National Educational Council) were established under the professional direction of the ministry (Halász, 1998), institutions of higher education won back their professional autonomy and self-governance, the Hungarian Academy of Sciences got back its independence² and a number of professional civil organizations dealing with education were established (Trencsényi, 1997).

¹1993. évi LXXXIX. törvény a közoktatásról (1993 LXXXIX Public Education Act).

²1994. évi XL. törvény a Magyar Tudományos Akadémiáról (1994 XL Act on the Hungarian Academy of Sciences).



The changes also significantly impacted educational content, too. Requirements related to Socialist ideology and upbringing were removed from various curriculum documents. The appearance in content of a variety of values and perspectives, side by side, became acceptable. The 1995 National Core Curriculum, with its novel approach,³ further expanded the scope of professional decision-making at institutional level in the area of regulating content. Locally-prepared pedagogical programs, curricula and textbooks, became the fundamental documents of schools' pedagogical work.

In the course of the 1990s, the expansion of secondary school education continued as the share of students who intended to pass their matriculation exams rose from 40% close to 70% within some age groups. At the turn of the millennium – in the wake of the integration of the universities – *universitas*-type institutions, based on Middle Ages tradition, were established, then the tiered higher education system (BA/MA) was set up, following European examples, with the accession to the so-called Bologna Process (Kozma, 2004). Together, these processes resulted in the introduction in 2005 of a new (dual-level) matriculation system,⁴ examination questions founded on competency-based requirements as well as a standardized approach to evaluation (Halász & Lannert, 2001: 19–23; Halász & Lannert, 2004: 23–26; Horváth & Lukács, 2006). As a result of a shift in societal needs and regulatory environment, and the establishment of new institutions and the expansion of old ones, universities adopted an “open doors” principle, thus between 1990 and 2004, the number of full-time students in higher education nearly tripled.

After the turn of the millennium, the process of European Union accession accelerated. International tendencies and expectations arising from the challenges of the knowledge economy became more and more pronounced in Hungary. An appreciation of human skills, the paradigm of life-long learning, and the necessity of the broad application of competency-based education became generally accepted. This approach was reflected in the 2003 NCC and even more so in its 2007 modification, which came with the incorporation of key competencies recommended by the European Union. Competitiveness challenges followed European Union accession, and the education system's problems with effectiveness and efficiency were highlighted in published PISA results. Although an overreaching education strategy did not take shape, a policy approach focused on quality intensified, resulting in the development of the standardization of accreditation requirements (curriculum, examination, textbook), the launch of a new system of evaluation and assessment (DIFER, Competency evaluation) and the appearance of quality development programs at institutional level (IMIP, FEMIP) (Balázs, Kocsis, & Vágó, 2011: 17–32).

³130/1995 (X. 26.) Kormányrendelet a Nemzeti alaptanterv kiadásáról. (Government decree on the issue of the National Core Curriculum, no. 130, promulgated October 26, 1995).

⁴100/1997. Kormányrendelet az érettségi vizsga szabályzatáról (Government decree on the regulation of the matriculation exam, no. 100); 40/2002. OM-rendelet a részletes érettségi követelményekről (Ministry of Education decree on detailed matriculation requirements, no. 40); 243/2003. 12.17. Kormányrendelet a Nemzeti alaptanterv kiadásáról, bevezetéséről és alkalmazásáról (Government decree on the issue, introduction and application of the National Core Curriculum, no. 243, promulgated December 17, 2003); 202/2007. (VII.31.) Kormányrendelet a Nemzeti alaptanterv módosított egységes szerkezetbe foglalt szövege (Government decree on the modified amalgamated text of the National Core Curriculum, no. 202, promulgated July 31, 2007)



In the second half of the 2000s, the issues of the decline in the school-age population, the increase in the proportion of marginalized social groups and the aging of the population came to the forefront (Fazekas, Köllő, & Varga, 2008; Bölcsék Tanácsa, 2009: 5–40). Compliance with the criteria outlined in the Treaty of Lisbon approved by the EU intensified the challenges arising from the ground gained in education by the technology revolution and digital technology, necessitating the establishment of a new system of qualification. EU programs and funding (HEFOP, TAMOP) could not counter to a sufficient degree the withdrawal of funding started as a result of the 2008 global economic crisis. Competency-based program packages that aimed to give impetus to lagging integration and class-level pedagogical processes produced mixed results, as did the full privatization of the continuing education system and the textbook market, too. No meaningful improvement was seen in the effectiveness of the education system, compliance with equability criteria supporting lagging convergence, or gauges of society's satisfaction with regard to education.

After 2010, there was a radical restructuring of educational governance and the education portfolio ceased to have independent ministerial representation. The 2011 Act on Public Education, Higher Education and Vocational Training launched a move in the opposite direction as the “regulatory pendulum”, offering the ineffectiveness apparent in the previous decades as reasoning. The scale of the state's role gradually increased, and powerful centralization efforts unfolded in the areas of custody, employment, content regulation and oversight. Labor market expectations, the expansion of the system of church-run institutions and a resolve to restrict the educational marketplace became priorities (Iskola, Erkölc, Tudás, 2009).

The school-leaving age was reduced from 18 to 16⁵ and new centralized curricula of a prescriptive nature (NCC, Framework Curricula 2012) came into force.⁶ The state, instead of municipal councils, became the biggest custodian of schools; a school district and oversight system were established⁷; a new career path for teachers was rolled out⁸; the earlier formula-based funding was replaced with task-based funding; and the nationalization and centralization of the textbook market was completed by the end of decade (Györgyi, 2016; Varga, 2018, 2019). The vocational training system underwent a continuous restructuring with the aim of validating employers' interests and raising their headcount. The influence of the business sphere strongly prevailed in the effort to promulgate the dual education model (school/factory). The names and content of training tracks and forms were changed every 2–3 years, the training period was reduced as was the time dedicated to general education subjects (Fehérvári, 2014; Mártonfi,

⁵2011. évi. CCIV. törvény a nemzeti felsőoktatásról (2011 CCIV Act on National Higher Education).

⁶110/2012. (VI. 4.) Kormányrendelet a Nemzeti alaptanterv kiadásáról (Government decree on the issue of the National Core Curriculum, no. 110, promulgated June 4, 2012); 50/2012. (XII. 21) EMMI rendelet a kerettantervek kiadásának és jogállásának rendjéről (Ministry of Human Capacities decree on the issue and legal status of curricula, no. 50, promulgated December 21, 2012).

⁷20/2012. (VIII. 31.) EMMI rendelet a nevelési-oktatási intézmények működéséről és a köznevelési intézmények névhasználatáról (Ministry of Human Capacities decree on the operation of educational-instructional institutions and the use of names at institutions of public education, no. 20, promulgated August 31, 2012).

⁸326/2013. (VIII. 30.) Kormányrendelet a pedagógusok előmeneteli rendszeréről és a közalkalmazottak jogállásáról szóló 1992. évi XXXIII. törvény köznevelési intézményekben történő végrehajtásáról (Government decree on the system of advancement for teachers and the implementation of the 1992 XXXIII. Act on the Legal Standing of Public Sector Employees in institutions of public education, no. 326, promulgated August 30, 2013).



2016: 46–57). Substantial changes also took place in the area of higher education as the integration of universities continued to varying degrees and levels of intensity and the state's role as a custodian, managing authority and supervisor increased. The introduction of the chancellor system transformed universities' internal order of governance as the authority of rectors and senates shifted rather to the academic sphere.⁹ After 2013, the teacher training system became undivided, but with two outcomes: university or college.¹⁰

A new system was also established for acquiring a PhD. The balance of things in the past 30 years is contradictory: in spite of decentralization at the beginning and the later efforts to centralize, and far-reaching regulatory changes, as well as the utilization of significant EU funding, there was no groundbreaking or spectacular improvement. The restructuring of the school system to better create opportunity and improve cost-efficiency, the rectification of scope-of-opportunity discrepancies between settlements and institutions, and access to quality education for all failed to materialize. In spite of a number of local and regional innovations, the whole of the education system still needs fixing (Varga, 2018, 2019).

THE WORLD OF PEDAGOGY – TEACHERS

The role, understanding and method of establishing knowledge has fundamentally changed in the knowledge-based society. A competency- and outcome-based educational paradigm that focuses on teaching results has become dominant. Acceptance of the demand and necessity for lifelong learning (LLL) has grown, as has the acknowledgment that the broad use of ICT devices and gradual expansion of knowledge-sharing platforms and learning networks can significantly improve the effectiveness of educational processes.

International assessments (PISA) have appeared in the interest of gauging scholastic performance. It can be interpreted as a significant change in attitude that the latest requirements approach competencies not only individually but from a collective perspective (collective competencies – EU new key competencies), and the perspective of student agency or student voice, which expresses the stand that students should participate in learning processes and in shaping curriculum, has a more pronounced presence (OECD, Education 2030).

In the world of teachers, the concept of learning has changed dramatically: the process of education has become learner-centered, the teacher is no longer the sole source of knowledge, rather the student is the independent organizer, planner and manager of his or her own acquisition of knowledge. These new approaches have transformed to a significant degree the earlier form and structure of classroom instruction and places learning activities based on the learner's perspective in the focus. New learning technologies that are becoming commonplace put the particular individual needs of students in the spotlight, thus accelerating the

⁹2011. Évi. CCIV. Törvény a nemzeti felsőoktatásról (2011 CCIV. Act on National Higher Education).

¹⁰283/2012. (X. 4.) Kormányrendelet a tanárképzés rendszeréről, a szakosodás rendjéről és a tanárszakok jegyzékéről (Government decree on the system of teacher training, the order of specialization and the register of teacher specializations, no. 283, promulgated October 4, 2012); 8/2013. (I. 30.) EMMI rendelet a tanári felkészítés közös követelményeiről és az egyes tanárszakok képzési és kimeneti követelményeiről (Ministry of Human Capacities decree on common requirements for teacher preparation and training and outcome requirements for some teacher specializations).



personalization of learning in the institutionalized world of education. In this spirit, organizational learning procedures (e.g. the portfolio and the project) and teaching methods (e.g. debate, gamification) have emerged again and again in the past decades, and appreciation of teachers' methodological knowledge has grown (Einhorn, 2012).

Teachers must find their places in an educational world that has its own particularities, different from the ones until now, thus the matter of the professionalization of teachers' work has become an important issue in the recent period. It has become a priority for teachers to possess a rich methodological repertoire, as that can ensure the effective implementation of their work. It is not by chance that the matter of teacher training has shifted into the focus in the policy thinking of developed countries. In European practice, the complex approach of a career path based on constant teacher development is characteristic: the phases of a teacher's career path make up a coherent system based on teacher competencies (Stéger, 2012).

It has long been an anomaly of Hungarian teacher training that, in spite of every reform, the connection between theory and practice, between the three independent areas of disciplinary instruction, educational studies and pedagogical/methodological practice, are not organic but contingent, both in the academic sphere and in the course of pedagogical/methodological instruction conducted at universities. A number of significant reform processes have affected Hungarian teacher training in the past decade and a half, in higher education on the one hand and in public education on the other. Among these should be highlighted the crowding of higher education, the implementation of integration processes, the introduction of the Bologna system, the appearance of qualification and outcome requirements, and the pass-through of the effects of changes in public education (e.g. new type of content regulation, the elimination of conventional admission).

These processes have been hindered and continue to be hindered to this day because didactic knowledge of subject (better known as methodological, subject pedagogy knowledge) is generally not sufficiently preferred in the structure of higher education, also evidenced by the fact that this area is part of disciplinary instruction in some universities and part of pedagogical instruction at others.

The traditional approach of historiography does not consider history didactics as an independent field of science. As a result, the students also view history didactics as a less significant field of the training. Even though the public education approach has been built on the paradigm of lifelong learning for more than two decades, academic elements still have too great a weight in the content and approach mediated in teacher training. Educators rarely translate the theoretical findings of contemporary studies in education and other subjects into the language of practice. Thus starting teachers who leave the lecture halls of universities and colleges may more than once feel helpless and, looking back at their studies, judge that knowledge transferred to them to be in large part pointless (Csapó, 2012; Szőke-Milinte, 2018).

One of the reasons for this unfavorable phenomenon is that a negligible share of the teachers who instruct subjects in teacher training have experience in public education. The situation is similar at most institutions and faculties of educational studies. At most, professionals with only theoretical grounding instruct pedagogical subjects, which is why studies often become overly theoretical, as the instructors cannot underpin their instructional practice with credible practical examples. Furthermore, the subject pedagogues (subject-specific methodologies), because of their practical nature, are often on the bottom rung of the prestige ladder in teacher training. The research and development activities subject pedagogues conduct in the area of public



education qualifies only incidentally as scientific work, and subject pedagogues are sometimes compelled at university to do their research or PhD work in disciplinary areas so as to comply with the academic aspects of instructors' evaluations.

HISTORY TEACHING IN A HUNGARIAN AND INTERNATIONAL CONTEXT

Trends in history teaching in the past decades have been influenced rather by Hungarian historiography, which is undergoing a transformation, and reflection on international history didactics, in addition to the changing policy of remembrance and education. Historiography, in the light of the selection of teaching content, the transfer of new research findings and the presentation of new highlighted content, has designated orientation points and direction, more or less, while international history didactics functions as a yardstick with regard to approaches to the latest pedagogical approaches, teaching strategies and methods.

Changes in Hungarian historiography

In the past century and a half in Hungary, political and ideological changes have continuously shocked the generations, one after the other. At the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries, a nationalist historical approach and history teaching that strengthened the cohesion of the nation state prevailed. From the 1920s, the intellectual historical approach dominated in the schools, culminating in irredentism in the 1930s. From 1945, after a brief democratic transition following WWII, the exclusivity of the Bolshevik system of thought dominated public discourse, and the vulgar Marxist historical approach characterized history textbooks. In addition to the class struggle, the "complete elimination of the past" and the proclamation of full discontinuity, the single-party dictatorship entangled the study and teaching of history in a loop of law-like progress with teleological utopian promises for forty years. The reign of terror of the 1950s, and the "goulash communism" that developed after 1956 put meaningful historical discourse into hibernation, leaving countless unprocessed nerve-wracking historical issues at the individual, collective and national level, unaddressed. There were taboo topics (e.g. the Soviet occupation, the single-party system, the Jewish question, the trauma of Trianon, the issue of minorities), about which there could be no discussion in the official public framework.

From the end of the 1980s, on the eve of the change of system, the ideology-free approach to the historical past gained ground, the need for pluralist approaches became more evident as the silencing of earlier taboo topics (e.g. the Soviet occupation) became untenable. The study of history experienced the change of system as a liberation, because it could be freed from the compulsory ideological weights required in Marxist historiography, thus the class struggle approach, the concept of social formation and the primacy of the material/economic base were excluded. The so-called internationalist approach to contemporary topics ceased, and Hungarian history in the second half of the 20th century was fundamentally reinterpreted. The re-evaluation of the events of 1956 challenged the legitimacy of the foundations and assessment of the Kádár regime: from a counter-revolution, there came a revolution/freedom fight.

After the change of system, historiography broke away from the long-standing dominant teleological view of history, from the view that history is progressing in a certain direction, evolving, that it is coherent and even has an end. The representatives of the study of history moved past that 19th century obsession according to which historians must be capable of



recording the past “just as it happens”. New topics appeared, the profiles of social history and history of mentalities were raised, women’s history came to the forefront, the postmodern approach gained ground and the multiperspective way of seeing things became generally accepted.

The perspective of Europe became an important aspect that meant, on one hand, the new legitimization of classical ideological-social and economic traditions (e.g. Judeo-Christian teachings, the principle of separation of powers, private ownership) and, on the other hand, a declaration of belonging to a geographic, economic and cultural area. One of the most widely read appearances of this point of view was the Hungarians in Europe series (Engel, 1990; Kosáry, 1990; Szakály, 1990), written by a reputable history professor of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. For a long time, the series defined not only the perspective of academia but of teaching, too, as regulation on content was decidedly supported by the theses expressed therein (Engel, Szakály, Kosáry, & Glatz, 1993). In the 1990s – with the end of the bipolar world – came the emphatic appearance of the global approach which viewed world events in a different light, in a more complex contextual system (Fischer, 1996).

The reputable professional workshops of historiography systematically, in a far-reaching manner at institutional level, did not deal with the theoretical or practical scientific questions of history teaching, but a number of historians,¹¹ at various levels and to varying degrees, participated in the preparation of and discourse over textbooks defining the rules of content (curricula, matriculation requirements) in public education.

In the course of the 2000s – parallel with the establishment of the multi-polar world system – appreciation grew for local and personal history. A number of suppressed topics came into the focus of academic study, such as the operation of the communist state security arm, the issue of victims, the development of the position of the church during the period of dictatorship, or the role of the civil sphere in everyday life. The advancement of personal historicity in remembrance policy has been further strengthened lately by the large-scale expansion of social media. Paradoxically, the spread of social media has unfavorably impacted the exclusivity of the recognition of historiography based on scientific norms, because the scientific writings form a more complicated and complex picture of the past, while interest has grown in writings that contain insufficiently backed findings, simplified theories (e.g. the role of conspiracies) or pseudo-scientific approaches, and these have become widely accessible.

After the change of system, most history teachers expected from the study of history a simple knowledge, free of ideological biases, that they could pass on to their students. Today, it has become clearly evident that that was an illusion at the time, too, and remains so today as well. The study of history requires a longer time to address suppressed topics, misconceptions and false myths – that affect public thinking and public education, too – and historical as well as broader social debates need to be continued, in an appropriate social atmosphere (Fischerné, 2010). Unfortunately, the latter is in short supply today, because in spite of pluralistic relationships, dealing with the past has become, to a significant degree, a political battleground, too, thus the interpretation of the significance of one or another historical event becomes part of symbolic politicizing in many cases, intended or not, making the formulation of sober and objective discourse and narratives impossible (Kaposi, 2018, 2020a).

¹¹Pál Engel, István Draskóczy, Ferenc Fischer, Ferenc Glatz, György Gyarmati, Gábor Gyáni, Péter Hahner, Róbert Hermann, László Katus, György Németh, Géza Pálffy, Attila Pók, Ignác Romsics, Konrád Salamon, Sándor Szakály, László Tökéczki and Géza Závodszy, among others.



The main directions and trends of international history didactics

In the past three decades, a number of new processes – often connected to each other, but also sometimes conflicting or opposing – in the area of history teaching can be diagnosed. All of these are related to the challenges of the global world, the spread of the proliferation of the knowledge economy and the paradigm of lifelong learning; they connect to the remembrance policy of societies, the development of historiography, the change in the perception of knowledge and the pronounced spread of digitalization.

In the 1990s, points of view and theories which were earlier unfamiliar in practice in Hungary became known all at once. With regard to the regulation of content, the theory of curriculum was of defining significance. On the one hand, it placed the perspective of the students' development in the focus when selecting teaching materials; on the other hand, it introduced the core curriculum as a type of thing that increases professional autonomy at institutional level. Furthermore, it stressed not only a more complex approach to subjects (e.g. areas of education), but the perspective of integrative learning, too (Mátrai, 1990; Nagy, 1981; Pellens & Szabolcs, 1991; Szebenyi, 1989). In addition to the conventional chronological approach, room was made for other topical, synchronous approaches, too, but the legitimacy of the chronological principle was really never questioned. That is when – in relation to the spread of constructivist pedagogy – the so-called in-depth approach (Chambliss & Calfee, 1998; Knausz, 2003: 8–11) to historical topics gained acceptance. It assumes that knowledge must not only be received but must be reconstructed in students' awareness in the course of processing. For this reason, this teaching strategy puts the longer study of fewer topics in the focus of its program, giving it priority over the volume of topics. The 1990s marked the appearance of new topics, new approaches and new methods of processing. Economic policy decision-makers acknowledged that the subject of history and society's historical awareness contributed to a significant degree to the understanding of relations between various peoples, religions and states, and could play a key role in the fight against social deviance (aggression, exclusion) (Halász, 2005: 65–70; Huddleston, 2002: 31–40). At this time, stress on social and cultural history, and history of mentalities increased in historiography – in connection to the spread of the post-modern approach – and the processing of topics earlier addressed on the periphery (areas outside of Europe, the history of women and children, minorities, natural environment) all became more common. Following this change in method of approach, the emphasis of the personal horizon in remembrance policy increases, the appreciation of oral history grows, and the appearance of cultural diversity, as a value, becomes more widely accepted as well as the multiperspective and controversial approach. The so-called “narrative competency”, which puts stress on thinking about alternatives, willingness to debate, the ability to form and shape opinions independently, and the development of problem-solving thinking, was placed high up in the hierarchy of history instruction goals (Kaposi, 2016). In this way, the strategy of problem-based learning in history teaching (problemorientierter Geschichtsunterricht) (F. Dárdai, 2002: 34–43; Uffelmann, 1999) or discovery learning (entdeckendes Lernen) and inquiry-based learning (forschendes Lernen) (Kojanitz, 2011) gained ground in German- and English-speaking areas. These teaching strategies do not emphasize rote learning of historical knowledge, but are based on the acknowledgment that the activity of the students and the authentic context play an important role in the effectiveness of learning (Jonassen, 1997). Naturally, this process brought the teaching principle of substantive history to the forefront, and competition with the



disciplinary understanding of history teaching strategy has been ongoing ever since. In the 1990s, the global approach to studying the past becomes generally accepted, as history is nothing more than the common history of humanity. The so-called Europe horizon gets a new understanding and context in the multipolar world system, too (Vajda, 2020). In connection with this, there is growing acknowledgment that the attitudes and idea of community identity transferred by the subject of history plays a key role in maintaining democratic systems. The teaching of civics in schools gained a greater appreciation on the European continent starting at the end of the 1990s, thanks to efforts by the Council of Europe which launched a program for education for democracy and dubbed the year 2005 the “European Year of Citizenship Through Education”. Curricula and requirements were supplemented to an even greater degree with content on knowledge of current affairs as well as with novel practices demanding students’ involvement with the aim of educating for democracy (Halász & Lannert, 2003; Setényi, 2003). During the period around the turn of the century, the competency-based way of thinking and the learning-teaching strategies based thereon became one of the defining features of educational theory. Instead of “explicit” knowledge, “tacit or passive” knowledge embedded in the personal or social competencies of the student were brought to the forefront (European Commission, 2007). The prevalence of this mindset was also manifested in the placement of so-called key competencies in the focus of discourse. As a result of the competency-based approach, greater emphasis was placed on so-called key concepts, as these created the chance for students to become able to recognize the connections, similarities and differences between events, to systematize their processed historical knowledge, and to identify repeated historical patterns and generalities (Stradling, 2001). Competency-based strategies and the curricula tailored to bipolarity in many countries logically led to the strengthening of aspects of quality and effectiveness in the world of education. This mindset was manifested in the formation of systems of assessment and evaluation and in the increased role of so-called outcome or examination requirements. An important element of the Europeanization trends affecting the world of education was the creation of the European key competencies which served as road signs to orientate content development underway in member states. With regard to history instruction, the social studies and civics competency was included in this framework containing the interpersonal, intellectual and social, as well as civic competencies, too. The document established the most important knowledge, abilities and attitudes for education for citizenship, and it addressed documents of significance (e.g. European Union Charter of Fundamental Rights) as well as the connection between national or European events and the events of world history and the institutional system of European integration. In the area of abilities, it highlights proficiency in public affairs as well as the necessity of participation in community activities and decision making. Another feature is stressing that the entire course of education is part of a complex social problem-solving mindset that assumes “social issues must be weighed in multidimensional, complex systems, that is, we must see that there are diverse players interests and alternatives”. In the past decade, in discourse over history didactics, it has become generally accepted that the development of historical thinking¹² is one of the most important tasks of history teaching. One of the most important goals of teaching history in schools is to shape a kind of

¹²International literature on the subject uses the expressions historical consciousness or historical reasoning, and sometimes historical literacy is the designation.



adaptable framework of interpretation with which “events that have been processed and known trends can be effectively applied in well structured, new situations to support the understanding of the past or the present, and interpret changes in the future.” (Kojanitz, 2013). Furthermore, dealing with history helps them to understand those who are historically and culturally divergent, different and dissimilar and “apply the kind of knowledge, skills, attitudes and values that enable the individual to effectively take part in an everyday life founded on democratic values in a civil society.” (Hoskins & Crick, 2008). In practice, such an approach to teaching “promotes the development of students’ competencies to act (learning by working) ahead of the mere interpretation of the events of the past (frontal learning)” (F. Dárdai, 2002). In recent years, the scope of problems related to inclusion and cultural diversity has come to the fore (Barsch, Degner, Kühberger, & Lücke, 2019). This attempted overview, which is by no means complete, shows that a number of international theories and practices regarding history teaching have appeared in the professional discourse in Hungary in the past decades, not infrequently in harmony with the recommendations of ISHD and Euroclio. Ideas for reform have emerged especially in the area of content regulation, but these novelties could not be put into pedagogical practice in Hungary in a coherent manner amid the challenges posed in the system of coordination by the frequent changes to education policy and the new pedagogical paradigm.

HISTORY TEACHING

An encompassing assessment of Hungarian history instruction in the past decades has not been undertaken (Ranschburg, 2004), so in this section, we present changes that have taken place in curricula, examination requirements and the area of textbooks in addition to showing the overall picture. These show well, both separately and together, those tendencies and contradictions that can be traced back to the ideological-spiritual consequences of the change of system, the turnarounds in education policy, the “top-down” will to reform and the challenges of changing approaches to pedagogical thinking.

General overview

There is no need to prove or certify that a significant proportion of history teachers experienced the turnaround at the end of the 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s as a real liberation. The desire to be freed from the various “weights” affected every clear-thinking teacher. During the years when the system changed, a wave of professional self-organization was initiated (e.g. teacher organizations and workshops were established; publications were printed) and communities of history teachers could decisively and meaningfully articulate their interests at various conferences. On such occasions representatives of different viewpoints often had sharp debates over what should be left out of the earlier compulsory teaching materials and what should be included that was earlier prohibited. Peculiarly, there was relatively little discussion of classroom methodology and the various forms of processing; and that shows that the key to change for the history teachers was the rearrangement of teaching materials, and not changing the processing strategy (Fischerné, 2010; Kaposi, 2010, 2015a, 2020b; Katona, 2004a; Szabolcs, 2007). The political change of system could not handle those problems that were already present in the Kádár system, be they active or latent (e.g. students’ lack of motivation, disinterest; a lack of reading and problems understanding texts). From the mid-1990s, some teachers felt that their



professional prestige had become tarnished as their earlier approach to history, adopted either voluntarily or through compulsion, had, in whole or in part, been eschewed. The underlying reason for this was that public opinion as well as some people within the profession had interpreted the political changes simply as a precursor to change. A telling example of this was the teaching of the 1956 Hungarian Revolution which was treated as a counter-revolution before the change of system, then afterward – within a period of a few months – was required to be taught as a revolution. The sudden appearance of various historical approaches also posed a challenge, as did the unsustainability of the deterministic, single-perspective approach to history. These changes were understandable, but a less fortunate side effect was the exclusion, from the early 1990s, of any kind of historical interpretation, explanation or value judgment from the teaching process, with the justification that after the earlier ideological constraints, teachers didn't want to burden teaching with new shackles of thinking.

In the spirit of the developing and expanding “fact fetishism” (Katona & Sallai, 2020: 69–86) (which held that only historical data should be processed), many teachers returned to the earlier outdated monologic methods, to frontal teaching, and even in extreme situations to classroom dictation, as a result of which teaching practice was characterized by the “processology” (Herber, 2010) of the deterministic approach. In the period connected to the change of system, the attitude of teachers of subjects was characterized by confidence in the expected transformation of subject matter, both in relation to the goals and the methods of history teaching. The foundation of that confidence was primarily the opportunity offered to import topics that were earlier taboo and prohibited approaches, and to win back the professional autonomy that was earlier restricted or taken away entirely by the powers that be. In the meantime a lack of analysis on debates beyond the matter of subject content, about interpretation of history and the practical effects of the knowledge revolution taking place in the world, unfortunately contributed to the fact that the international practice based on so-called narrative tendencies (F. Dárdai, 2002: 35.), intended to address the challenges of the age, didn't make it to Hungary at all, or did not arrive in the kind of context that would have allowed the further organic development of local traditions and the creation of a sort of synthesis that could have represented Hungarian heritage and new European requirements and trends at the same time. The change of system significantly reduced the opportunity to influence directly the practice of everyday teaching with external means (e.g. with professional overseers). This led to a strengthening of the professional autonomy of schools and teachers of subjects. The state could only validate its intentions indirectly, which would have resulted in a wide-spread adoption of modern pedagogical thinking (Jakab, 2000a, 2000b). On the practical level, that meant that institutions themselves drafted their pedagogical documents and local curricula, but a resulting change in approach was produced either not at all or to a negligible degree. The expected subject pedagogical changes did not take place, thus those changes that were outlined in institutional pedagogical programs and local curricula were hardly, if at all, noticeable in schools at classroom level. This was confirmed by observations conducted on the impact of content regulation by the Hungarian Institute for Educational Research and Development (HIERD) in the 1990s (Ranschburg, 2004: 116–141.) which examined how history teachers were affected by the professional challenges presented by the introduction of the NCC (1995) and the curricula that followed (2001). The observation confirmed that subject teachers continued to use the methodologies applied earlier in their classroom hours. The review pointed as well to the paradox that the degree of renewal in history teaching deemed by developers to be the minimum was evaluated to be the maximum degree by



subject teachers teaching on a day-to-day basis. The evaluation also showed that textbooks and knowledge-related requirements were dominant, while processing and interpreting sources played a small role. Later assessments also confirmed that we could see a very differentiated picture in the area of history teaching in practice, too. The new matriculation examination introduced in 2005 – as a strong outcome requirement – was perhaps most able to effect change of content and methodology at the classroom level. That activity confined to merely transferring information was reduced in teachers' work, while the share of source- and activity-centered teaching practice increased, complemented by new, interactive organizational learning methods (e.g. projects, pair work, drama pedagogy) and new textbooks with new approaches (reading sources, criticizing sources, multiperspective and controversial approaches).

Naturally, this pedagogical culture shift previously described did not become widely adopted in everyday practice. Frontal and dictation methods continue to be present in classrooms as confirmed by evaluations conducted in recent years. The data show a 44-percentage-point difference between the enjoyable, attention-grabbing and motivating teaching that students expect and the practice in everyday classroom instruction (Sági, 2015: 88–89). An online survey for a recent study (Kamp, 2019a) shows that a pronounced change has not taken place in the area of everyday practice with regard to activity-centered education. In classes, teachers' presentations and explanations take 15–20 min and their illustrations another 5–10 min, thus the teachers' activities continue to dominate two-thirds of the hour. The researchers/surveyors also reported that the teachers, including the history teachers, do not take advantage of the new pedagogical challenges and activities arising from changes to the role of teacher – or the spread of digitalization – as a positive opportunity, but rather as a burden, and don't see it as necessary for the knowledge they have acquired until now. For teachers using the dominant method of knowledge transfer, the new requirements (motivating and interactive methods, active student participation), that is, the so-called role of facilitator does not appear to be attractive, they are not prepared for it, nor are they convinced that it will be more effective from the point of view of preparing their students.

A presentation of the situation of history teaching would not be complete without a look at experiences regarding students' level of preparedness (knowledge, skills, attitudes). Unfortunately, our knowledge in this area is severely lacking. The main reason for this is that in the past 30 years, there has been no broad collection of data or evaluation, based on scientific norms, seeking to discover the level of students' interest in history, their interpretation of concepts connected to the covered topics, their multilevel cause-causal associations, and their nuanced interpretation of historical figures or events. Of course, local and regional evaluations (Albert, 2011: 91–94; Kojanitz, 2015; Szebenyi & Vass, 2002; Zrinszky & Kinyó, 2017), of varying size, have taken place, but none of them were repeated a number of times, and all of them involved only a single question. We also have at our disposal the results of the history matriculation examination for secondary school-leavers, but here, too, there has been a scientific processing of those results only since the introduction of the new type of matriculation examination (Kaposi & Dárdai, 2006; F. Dárdai & Kaposi, 2008). Since then, we really have only statistical data based on the presentations of the Education Office¹³: each year, about 70,000 students take the

¹³Information related to the matriculation examination in previous years, presentations and studies of the most important statistical data: https://www.oktatas.hu/koznevelés/erettsegi/prezentaciok_tanulmanyok (12.04.2021).



matriculation examination, and 8–9% of those opt for the advanced level one. Only numbers are produced from the students' results: at the mid-level, students finish the exam each year with an average grade of 3.5, and those in the gymnasium generally get 10% higher results than those in vocational training or taking correspondence courses or night classes. The relatively large number of students who choose to take the advanced level history matriculation examination is not informative as it does not indicate a commitment to studying history, but rather shows that students can apply the admission points they gain in several areas of higher education (law, economics). This is also evident in the plans students who place in the National Secondary School Study Contest have for their continuing education. Processing the data that could be extracted from the matriculation examination could significantly support the placement of the examination on a digital foundation. This possibility was examined by a number of studies five years earlier (Molnár & Pásztor-Kovács, 2015; Szepesi, 2017), but since then developments have taken a turn in another direction, so that is only conceivable in the long term and with the establishment of the appropriate institutional infrastructure. Our knowledge of primary school is even scarser as here there is no school-leaving examination, and there is no apparent education policy effort that would extend to a national competency assessment in the area of history. Unfortunately, countries that advocate assessments of democratic affairs have also become a minority in the framework of the OECD. Thus it appears that international intentions to extend the evaluation of IEA civic education competencies¹⁴ are weakening. Various primary and secondary school contests do not provide accessible information with regard to students' interest in and knowledge of history. In this rich, colorful and diverse area, the inventorying, evaluation and scientific processing of the often selfless work of teachers shall be the task of the coming period. For the 2020/21 academic year, almost 50 contests have been announced¹⁵ by central, regional and local institutions (e.g. the Education Offices, Teachers Centers, universities, schools, professional and civil organizations, associations, foundations). Several thousand students will certainly participate at these contests (although there are no such amalgamated data on this matter), demonstrating interest in the subject of history, while the process of preparing them presents a professional challenge for the numerous coaching teachers, as well as an acknowledgment when their students perform well. These contests could offer some kind of meaningful professional feedback on the situation of the subject, if data they produce, which is of greatly varying accuracy, along with the tasks, the solutions and the results could be scientifically processed on a regular basis by researchers. At present, beyond databases, we have at our disposal only announcements of results, reports and personal impressions.¹⁶ To the fundamental question of how students' attitude toward the subject of history has changed in the past 30 years, how their historical consciousness has been shaped in the course of processing the past, and the nature and the size of the role played by history instruction in the scholastic framework, we can

¹⁴International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement evaluations in the 1990s were motivated by the acknowledgment that a higher level examination of civics studies had become necessary in the interest of maintaining democracy and peace.

¹⁵Történelmi tanulmányi versenyek 2020/2021-es tanévben: Törizz otthon! (History studies contests in the 2020/2021 academic year: Study History at Home!) <http://torizzotthon.hu/tortenelem-tanulmanyi-versenyek/>; Történelemversenyek a 2020/2021-es tanévben (History Contests in the 2020/2021 Academic Year): Újkor.hu: <http://ujkor.hu/content/tortenelemversenyek-20192020-tanevben> (Downloaded: 2020.11.20.).

¹⁶<https://folyoiratok.oh.gov.hu/uj-koznevelés>; <https://folyoiratok.oh.gov.hu/article-category/tantrend> (2020.11.20.).



offer no scientifically-grounded answer. That is unfortunate because during that time, the central curricular requirements have been changed six times, and as a result the textbooks, and the requirements related to teacher training have changed three times. This is problematic, too, because a system of intervention that precedes facts and data could become the accepted paradigm, and that would put the necessity of scientific research into question in the long term.

Curricula

The restructuring of educational content regulation started in 1988, parallel with the process of the change of system. The changes were the subject of debates, of various depths and on various levels, lasting years. The 1995 National Core Curriculum (NCC) defined only the “core” of requirements for subjects for tenth-graders. It modified the conventional subject frameworks (establishing complex areas of literacy) and placed the development of the students in focus, not the teaching material. The subject of history became (along with social studies and the study of humanity) a part of the integrated approach to social sciences called *Human and Society Literacy Area*.

The structure and content of the area of literacy clearly showed a significant shift from the conventionally exclusive history teaching-centered approach to the complex social sciences approach dubbed “civic education”. Consequently, the core curriculum simultaneously presented the two forms of collective memory: the communicative and the cultural memory (Assmann, 2004: 51, 53). Taking this division into account, the curriculum, although concentrating mainly on the necessity of shaping the cultural memory, also made space for the perspective of the present. The changes were experienced by a significant part of history teachers as a dismemberment of history instruction, or, as some put it, “the Trianon of history teaching”.¹⁷ At the same time, advocates for the modernization of content saw the changes as a success (Jakab, 2003: 13).¹⁸ The 1995 NCC was also an important milestone with regard to content regulation because it regulated only the narrowest development goals and content elements, and reaching a consensus had played a key role in its preparation. In addition to the scientific sphere (renowned historians of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences), traditional and newly formed civil professional organizations also played a significant role in the course of its development. During the various phases of preparation – in spite of the lack of IT parameters at the time – teaching bodies and teachers were asked in detailed surveys about which elements of teaching materials should become part of the canon. This consensus seeking made the core curriculum a national matter, as it is legitimized not only by the elements that it contains, but also by the volume and scale of the professional accords that underlie it. The existence of this consensus also contributed in large degree to later supplements and adaptations (2001, 2003, 2007, 2012) – involving various approaches and intentions – and the history matriculation exam requirements introduced in 2005 also continued the approach and the basic structure of the 1995 NCC.

The review of the curriculum process shows that a dilemma, in large part connected to the change of system, became the focus of discourse: how and to what degree should the perspective of public commitment, concentrating on the society at the time, be present in addition to the

¹⁷The words of Ottó Szabolcs Ottó, which whipped up a storm.

¹⁸Considered a success because “it created space for subject areas that were earlier just scattered experiments to ‘grow up’.



traditionally culture-centered (e.g. academic and value neutral) approach of the subject of history (Kinyó, 2012). The debate played out against the backdrop of the tradition, in place since curricula were first regulated in Hungary, of the subject of history serving as the most emphatic sphere for education for citizenship (Kinyó, 2012; Szebenyi, 1989), as well as playing a defining role in shaping the national identity for more than a century (Katona, 2004b; Katona & Sallai, 2002). The subject of history retained this function even after the change of system and Hungary's accession to the European Union. It is the main goal of history teaching in Hungary to shape awareness of national identity, but also important is forming a feeling of belonging to Europe. As a consequence of the changing perception of knowledge, the more modern understanding that various student competencies (knowledge acquisition and processing, communication, thinking, orientation in historical space and time) need to be developed has gained greater acceptance, in addition to the traditional knowledge-centered approach. This led to a debate over knowledge or competencies in curriculum that lasted for a decade (1995–2005). The debate was further enlivened by the issue of whether civics, attitudes and skills could be integrated, and, if so, how they could be integrated with scholastic content and activities learned from conventional textbooks.

On the whole, changes in content regulation advanced the development of a various kinds of teaching materials supporting source-centered history teaching, the new types of skill-development tasks and problem-solving thinking, as well as the changes to the manners of approaching history teaching in schools, and the drafting of various interactive and reflective methodologies, alternative programs and novel textbooks.

These processes also bear witness to the increasing supplementation of traditional history instruction content and requirements with the elements of education for democracy, including a shift in focus to strengthening a complex problem-solving manner of thinking about social integration and social cohesion (Halász & Lannert, 2003). The advancement of this kind of approach in content regulation can be easily traced, as evident in both the 2003 and 2007 National Core Curriculum, and in the requirements of the 2005 matriculation examination (Kojanitz, 2014a, 2014b; Kaposi, 2016). The intensity of the process is also shown by the fact that social studies “grew up” to become an independent subject during the period and also appeared as a matriculation examination subject which some institutions of higher education accepted as a substitute for history when meeting admissions requirements.¹⁹

The matriculation examination

Examination development launched in 1995, after the issue of the National Core Curriculum, resulted in a significant restructuring of content and structure. Managing the secondary school expansion, which triggered admissions to higher education, was a priority goal of social policy. To this aim, the examination system was split into two levels, in which the so-called mid-level sought to serve the function of a matriculation examination, while the higher level aimed to serve as a selection tool for institutions of higher education. In addition to the introduction of the unified, dual-level examination, examination development goals were set to present new knowledge content, make competency development a focus, establish and broaden

¹⁹The process of curriculum development in the period 2016–2020 and the content regulations ordered in 2020 as well as the context of their introduction are not addressed.



standardization, widen the opportunity for individual students to choose their paths (flexibility) and create fairer conditions for continuing studies in higher education (Horváth & Lukács, 2005).

In the case of the subject of history, the defining element of the examination reform was the introduction of the written portion of the examination, with the intent of achieving comparability of overall examination results, the amalgamation of examination requirements and conditions, the broader adoption of new – considered novel even from an international perspective – assessment and evaluation practices, and the application in practice of methodological reforms in terms of approach and content. The new type of written examination tasks sought to focus on the assessment of applied knowledge rather than the conventional data-centered approach. The tasks demanded the (productive) application of what was learned in new situations rather than a reproduction of what was learned. To achieve that, all of the written tasks have some type of knowledge source (text, image, map, diagram, caricature, etc.) that contains the necessary information or supports the recall of knowledge elements (e.g. concepts) with which the task can be successfully completed. The allowed use of study aids and sources (e.g. maps, orthographic dictionaries), was a novel element of the examination.

The requirements of the oral examination focused on the problem-centered approach to historical phenomena and events. This was served by the thematic topic areas (economy, economic policy, material culture; population, settlements, way of life; individual, community, society; international cooperation and conflict; political institutions, ideas and ideologies; the operation of modern democracies) and the requirement that students explain, analyze and interpret the correlations of a historical problem.

An important element of the evaluation system for the matriculation examination became the pursuit of comparability. A comprehensive assessment was replaced by analytical evaluation according to competencies which express the required quality and scale of knowledge with measurable criteria. The novel correction and evaluation aspects also signaled that the criteria outlined in the task apply first of all to the operation performed (e.g. collection of information based on the given aspects, the formulation of simple conclusions from the causes or consequences of historical events) and not just the required concrete content (concepts, historical data) (Kaposi, 2006).

Textbooks

The tools that even today play a leading role in the process of the teaching-learning process are going through a period of generational change as knowledge bases that were earlier primarily paper-based are becoming in significant part accessible in digital form, too. The ever broader use of the internet in everyday life has produced new challenges in the area of conventional textbooks in nearly all levels of education, from primary school to university. For the past century and a half, since mass education became common, textbooks have drawn heightened scrutiny in the European sphere of culture. At the same time, textbooks can be seen as a mirror of the educational conditions of the time (Dárdai, 2002b).

Multifaceted change has taken place in the area of textbooks in Hungary in the past decades, educational goals contained in content regulation and textbook coherency have continuously improved – which is connected to the improvement in the quality assurance conducted in the approval process – as have textbooks' professional and technical quality, and their degree of goal



orientation. A welcome development was the appearance of textbook families, with a unified approach and form. The measure to which these textbooks are used to learn and teach is supplemented well by skills development workbooks, collections of task and data, topic summary worksheets and teacher handbooks (Kaposi, 2012). Assessment and approval of textbooks is conducted applying scientific, educational and bibliographic criteria. Lexical compliance with the framework curricula is a deciding criterion, as there are no accepted, unified scientific standards for the assessment of teaching methodologies. For this reason, and because of a lack of the application of a proficiency test based on reliable quantitative and qualitative criteria, the results are often professionally contradictory in terms of content and methodology.

Paradoxically, both positive and negative trends can be diagnosed in the area of textbook development at the same time. It could be considered a positive that the continuous expansion of explanations of concepts, questions and tasks can be seen in textbooks. The didactic apparatus underlying textbooks has become more and more varied, as has textbook design. It is apparent from more and more publications that authors and editors are required to have knowledge of learning theories. It could be considered a negative that the role of the textbook in learning has not been sufficiently defined in terms of methodology. Textbooks often follow outdated learning strategies and do little or nothing at all to advance students' active participation in meaningful learning. In many cases, their conceptual systems, activity systems and illustrations are ad hoc, and their texts are often incomprehensible or too difficult for students, using too much jargon. Among the reasons for this contradictory course is that textbook research in Hungary, grounded in theory and using scientific methods, started almost a decade and a half behind the international trend.

The re-nationalization, in 2014, of textbook publication and distribution, after more than a quarter of a century of market-based operation, created a new situation in the area of textbooks.²⁰ As a consequence of the change, textbook development became mainly a task of the state, which resulted not only in a reduction in the number of publishers, but a scaling back of institutions' opportunity for selection as well as the assortment of textbooks. At the same time as this process took place, it became commonplace for students to get their textbooks free of charge. The state textbook developer, the Hungarian Institute for Educational Research and Development (HIERD), which became part of the monopoly, launched the development of a new generation of knowledge transfer mediums (textbooks, digital teaching and learning tools, knowledge bases, etc.) in 2014 (Kojanitz, 2014a, 2014b; Kaposi, 2015c).

Parallel with the development of printed textbooks, work started to set up a large-capacity and easily accessible online platform: the National Public Education Portal. In recent years, the digital versions of the so-called New Generation textbooks, dubbed Smart Textbook, has appeared. This is a responsive design HTML book published as a SCORM package that can be run in a browser. In the longer term, the basic materials of the smart textbooks could be useful

²⁰A nemzeti köznevelés tankönyvellátásáról szóló 2013. évi törvény egyes rendelkezésének végrehajtásáról, valamint a tankönyvellátásban közreműködők kijelöléséről szóló 501/2013. (XII.29.) Korm. rendelet (Government decree on the implementation of some provisions of the 2013 Act on the National Supply of Textbooks in Public Education and on the designation of contributors to textbook supply, no. 501, promulgated December 29, 2013); A tankönyvvé, a pedagógus-kézikönyvvé nyilvánítás, a tankönyvtámogatás, valamint az iskolai tankönyvellátás rendjéről szóló 17/2014. (III. 12.) EMMI rendelet (Minister of Human Capacities decree on the declaration of textbooks and teacher handbooks, textbook subsidies, and the organization of school textbook supply, no. 17, promulgated March 12, 2014).



for managing the contradictions produced by the state monopoly on textbook development, as teachers can edit their own digital textbooks for their students with the products' intelligent use (Kamp, 2019b). The widespread use of digital education will certainly transform textbook development, use and distribution to a significant degree compared to practices at present.

HISTORY TEACHER TRAINING

The training of teachers in Hungary has been affected by a number of large-scale reform processes in the past decade and a half, both originating from the higher education side and the public education side. Among these should be highlighted the marked increase in enrollment at institutions of higher education, the implementation of integration processes, the introduction of the Bologna system, the appearance of qualification and outcome requirements, and the carry-through of the effects of changes in public education (e.g. new types of content regulation, the elimination of conventional admissions) (Fischer-Dárdai & Kaposi, 2015). At the beginning of the period in question, a dual system for teacher training was in place on the basis of the 1993 Higher Education Act²¹: the training of primary school teachers took place at teacher training colleges, while training of secondary school teachers took place at universities. The expansion of secondary education, the differentiation of the institutional system in higher education, and the demand for the professionalization of the teaching career, both in Hungary and abroad, launched the transformation of unified teacher training, integrated at university level, at the beginning of the 1990s.

In 1997, a provision was made on the unified requirements for teacher qualification in all subjects.²² The appendix of the government decree briefly defined the methodological (subject pedagogical) training in three points: 1. methodology training should be connected to the content and theoretical topic areas of the given subject, to overall pedagogical-psychological training, and to scholastic practices; 2. methodology (history) is an integrated study that includes related fields, subjects and areas of literacy; 3. its time frame is to be at least 150 h. In 2002, with the introduction of credit-based education, the number of credits for methodology was set at seven.²³

The switch to the dual-cycle, divided training entered force on July 1, 2006. Its implementation is not a clear story of success as a number of solutions were introduced that harmed interests and were ambiguous (too), although there are – especially in the area of teacher training – measurable results (Hunyady, 2009; Kotschy, 2009).

Above all should be highlighted the increase in the number of hours and the number of credits (10 instead of the earlier 7) in subjects dealing with history teaching methodology. In this new type of training, instruction in general subject knowledge and the study of history teaching

²¹1993. LXXX. törvény a felsőoktatásról (1993. LXXX. Act on Higher Education) (Repealed effective March 1, 2006.).

²²111/1997 (VI.27.) Kormányrendelet a tanári képzés követelményeiről (Government decree on teacher qualification requirements, no. 111, promulgated June 27, 1997). (Repealed effective December 30, 2005.)

²³77/2002. (IV. 13.) Kormányrendelet a felsőoktatási alapképzési szakok képesítési követelményeinek kreditrendszerű képzéshez illeszkedő kiegészítéséről (Government decree on supplementation suitable for qualification requirements for credit-based training in the basic majors of higher education, no. 77, promulgated April 13, 2002). (Repealed effective September 1, 2007.)



were separated, and the latter got a much bigger role than earlier with the clear intention of strengthening the teaching profession. This intention was also served by the teacher qualification exam that wound up the period of study. While specifications strengthening the teaching profession must be welcomed, the mandatory qualification requirements specified for everybody reflected a rather outdated concept, both in terms of their content and vocabulary. The outcome requirements necessary for teaching history were formulated based on a methodology that was clearly for history with a narrow pedagogical focus, rather than a broader – but still closely tied to the study of history – foundation of history didactics.

In view of the structure of the requirements of the new system of teacher training, they showed similarity to the National Core Curriculum in force at the time and also complied with the requirements expected for the matriculation examination, thus the spirit and the vocabulary of the two documents were in many respects the same (Fischer-Dárdai & Kaposi, 2015).

The reform process strongly impacted history teacher training, as structural changes were organically connected to subject-methodological challenges. The approach, focused on students' development, ahead of content, connected to the complex social sciences approach of the *Human and Society* area of literacy that was so pronounced in the curricular reforms based on modern theories, was unprepared for the classical subject of history taught at university (Katona, 2004b; Kaposi, 2018).

With regard to teacher training, the Bologna system could not surpass the effectiveness of the earlier system with regard to either the subject or the pedagogical areas. The career choice flexibility of the unified teacher training did not make the teaching profession any more attractive, but at the same time led to an over-proliferation of teaching majors that was not in line with the need for teachers at public education institutions. Coordination was also made difficult by the training of single-subject teachers which generated placement problems. A further problem was that the divided training made coordinating the development of the three components of the teaching craft (the field of discipline, subject didactics and pedagogy-psychology) difficult. The two-step system resulted in the artificial fragmentation of areas of study in a number of instances, including that of chronologically-based history teacher training. The unified teacher's masters degree course, on the other hand, suggested that the professional part of teaching subjects was only secondary. In this context, sharp criticism was expressed that the role of pedagogy in teacher training was too emphatic, nonetheless it does not adequately prepare teachers to resolve pedagogical problem situations or for remedial and differentiated teaching (Laczkovich, 2009; Radnóti – Király, 2015).

After the approval of the Act on Higher Education²⁴ consultations began at the professional level on the basis of which new qualification outcome requirements appeared in January 2013²⁵ and an undivided course of training started for those studying to become history teachers in September of that year.

In the undivided system of teacher training, the training for primary school (4+1 year) and secondary school (5+1 year) teachers was again separated. Admission in the training program

²⁴2011. évi CCIV. törvény a nemzeti felsőoktatásról (2011. CCIV. Act on National Higher Education).

²⁵8/2013. (I. 30.) EMMI rendelet a tanári felkészítés közös követelményeiről és az egyes tanárszakok képzési és kimeneti követelményeiről (Ministry of Human Capacities decree on common requirements for teacher preparation and qualification and outcome requirements for specific teaching subjects, no. 8, promulgated January 30, 2013).



takes place for a specific teaching subject (e.g. history teacher), that is, a single input, but with two possible outcomes (primary school and secondary school teacher). The practice teaching that follows the theoretical studies has been increased for both primary and secondary school teachers from half a year to a full year.

In the newly introduced history teacher training, the name of the course of study has been supplemented with “citizenship studies” as a result of the complex social sciences way of thinking that appears in the curricula. The requirements for the teacher training major that have come into force signaled the continuation of the forward-looking elements of the earlier reform, on the one hand, and clearly indicated public education as the party whose needs are to be served. Essentially, the same competency areas appear (space-time, critical thinking, communication) that play a role in the NCC, with the addition of the methodological knowledge and attitudes with which graduating students must be equipped. Additionally, the weight of training has shifted to the modern and the present era, the need for preparation for the ability to process and assess history from multiple perspectives in a nuanced manner has been outlined, and source and activity-based history teaching requirements that support learning this have become the focus. Thus the development of knowledge acquisition skills, the necessity of source-critical teaching and the use of electronic databases for teaching have become important key competencies for teachers (Deák, Erostyák, Fischer, Gerner, & Kaposi, 2013).

The experience so far shows that universities continue history teacher training exclusively in the 5+1 year format and so-called primary school teacher training in the 4+1 year format is found only at what were earlier colleges. The popularity of the latter is less than that of university training. With regard to the changes, many have deemed problematic – and judged to be a deviation from the European trend – the elimination of unified teacher training as well as the reduction in the number of credits for pedagogical subjects, and with that their importance, and have said this reduction could unfavorably impact the implementation of teacher professionalization that is adjusted to ever-changing pedagogical conditions.

The processes of the past decades show that the role and the importance assigned to the earlier dominant subject knowledge, otherwise known as disciplinary preparation, has declined significantly, and the prominence of requirements related to general teaching activity has increased. The requirements for history teacher training also clearly show the shift in approach to teacher training in so far as requirements are outlined as competencies (knowledge, skills, attitudes), on the one hand, and that within competencies, greater stress has been placed on general knowledge processing, communication and subject methodology skills at the expense of specific content (Kaposi, 2020b).²⁶

Naturally, further issues need resolution in the area of teacher training. A relatively recent survey regarding history teacher training examined (Gál, 2015) the degree to which units of study offered at ten institutions of higher education cover the development areas, educational goals and literacy area content requirements appearing in the National Core Curriculum. The research revealed – among other things – that not a single higher education program contained mandatory instruction in media awareness, economic and financial culture or the world of work,

²⁶A történelemtanár-képzés kontextusáról, a követelményekről bővebben (A Closer Look at the Context and Requirements of History Teacher Training).



even though those are all part of the curricula for the Human and Society literacy area in grades 5–8 and grades 9–12.

In Hungary, history is one of the popular subjects, in both public education as well as in teacher training, to which its special role in shaping and developing literacy, national identity and a sense of identifying with Europe lends significance. It plays a key role in making people living in society responsible citizens, because in modern societies built on cooperation learning the subject is key for those abilities and attitudes that fundamentally influence value choices in society and the feeling of belonging to a community. Thus with regard to the future of history teacher training – based on experience thus far – every effort should be made to ensure it meets the demands of public education, but there should also be a connect with the most important results of research in Hungarian and international history didactics.

Official statistical data from 2019 show that there are about 8,000 teachers in the subject of history in classrooms.²⁷ More than 2,500 work in Budapest (1,655) and Pest County (882). In Northeast Hungary, the most history teachers are in Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén County (650), Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg County (521) and Hajdú-Bihar County (475). The fewest are found in the counties of Nógrád (168), Somogy (218) and Vas (222). Information on applications for admission to history teacher training programmes in tertiary education has been available since the introduction of the undivided form of teacher training in 2013.²⁸ This shows that 560 students a year, on average, over the past eight years have started their studies at ten institutions of higher education (seven universities, three colleges), most of them studying at ELTE. The admission threshold has been set in a range of 305–350 points.²⁹ The data testify that it is not the most exceptional students who end up in the university lecture halls, but mostly those who are well prepared. Close to 70% of the students admitted in history programs complete their studies and are awarded a degree, and three-fourths end up as secondary school teachers. Educational statistics show that about one-third of the students who get their teaching degrees will leave the profession, while a further one-third will leave their positions with the first three years (Polónyi, 2019).

SUMMARY

A struggle for the acceptance of history didactics as an independent discipline has continued, with varying degrees of success in Hungary for the past three decades. It can be seen as a success that the modern aspects and recommendations mediated by history didactics have been included in content regulations (curricula, examination requirements) and textbooks, too, in the wake of top-down and centrally controlled reforms. History didactics workshops (PTE, PPKE) have been established, although their influence on the academic sphere has remained marginal. The operation of professional journals (Módszertani Lapok. Történelem, Történelemtanítás) and the continuation of various professional conferences, supported mainly by civil forces in the

²⁷The number of teachers teaching history (history and civic studies, homeland and people studies) subjects based on data from the 2019 KIR registry of people employed in education.

²⁸The authors own collection of data and calculation based on the FELVI database for tertiary education admissions.

²⁹The maximum number of points achievable is 500. At present, 305 points is the threshold for admittance to an institute of higher education.



profession, have made possible, with some interruption on a smaller or larger scale, regular discourse on the theoretical and practical issues of history teaching. Unfortunately, the awareness of and impact of these forums on everyday teaching practices has diminished rather than been fulfilled in the course of the decades, even though they could become the foundation for establishing definitive spaces for common learning and networks built on local innovations.

If we look back considering the results of the restructuring of history teaching, we can establish that significant changes can be diagnosed from the aspect of content and methodology in documents, curricula, examination requirements and textbooks, too. These changes are discernible in the change of stress of teaching materials content, on the one hand, and in the modification of methods of approach and processing (competency-centered) on the other. The modified National Core Curricula (2003, 2007, 2012) and especially the matriculation examination requirements (2005, 2015) clearly place the shaping of competency development and lifelong learning skills, as well as multiperspective and student-centered learning-teaching strategies in the focus.

The new matriculation examination requirements also had a marked impact on the everyday practice of teaching in secondary schools. The most significant shift could be understood to be the cessation of the further expansion of fact-based knowledge (data) in the course of classroom work and the growing acknowledgment in the process of teaching of the role of processing various kinds of sources. Thus the formation of knowledge acquisition and processing skills as well as the application in practice of empathy skills (change of perspective) could get a bigger role. It can be clearly said that preparation for the examination brought into practice a number new teaching methodologies based on student activities and definitely supported the development of students knowledge acquisition skills. In classroom instruction, the students conducted task-solving individually or in groups which increased the time spent on problem-solving and in-depth thinking. One of the important consequences of the introduction of the new history examination was also that it encouraged teachers in the subject to use source- and activity-centered history teaching as well as modern IT equipment for compiling practice questions for the examination. The appearance of the unified correction-assessment aspects advanced teacher cooperation within schools to a significant degree and, in certain instances, cooperation between schools. Teacher seminars on preparing for the examination and liaising on the advanced level examination have served and continue to serve this cooperation well.

Long-term social policy goals (national and European identity, social solidarity, commitment to democracy), the ever changing culture of remembrance and diverse historiography, as well as the changed perception of knowledge, induce history teaching with a complex approach, of which the ultimate goal is establishing historical literacy. Stories that are experience-based and that pique students' interest, that contain the building blocks for establishing a narrative way of thinking, must become the center of school study. For this reason, the designation of historical content processed in the school framework must be made more flexible, allowing the power to motivate students' interest to organically connect with the purpose of passing on the traditional national cultural code system. The further increasing weight of the modern and present time in the practice of history teaching, as well as finding a new balance between global and local topics, appears to be unavoidable. Developing historical and key competencies as well as thinking must be made a priority, and the learning of basic comprehension skills necessary to interpret documents, linguistic or other communication (e.g. visual) codes, and the recognition of tools and techniques used for manipulation are becoming ever more important requirements.



There are a number of reasons that the necessary changes did not take place, but exploring those requires further research. The predictability of educational policy, the strengthening of professional autonomy for institutions and teachers, support for development of school organization, and the spread of knowledge-sharing systems and networks could do much to give impetus to the effectiveness of the process of reform in the short term. It would also be of benefit if the stress on educational policy decisions and support would shift from the so-called macro level to the micro level. Instead of system-level intervention, greater attention should be paid to and more resources ensured for support of processes in the classroom, and the professional work of teachers. One of the keystones of the process of support could be bringing society on board with regard to central innovations (e.g. educational-instructional programs, textbook development), while promoting and sharing local good practices.³⁰ This process would also serve the recovery of the original intentions of the system of professional advising, with the involvement of teacher training institutions (Kaposi, 2015b).

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³⁰This was confirmed by the 2018 Save As and 2020 First Hand conferences of the Teachers Chapter of the Hungarian Historical Society. <https://tanaritagozat.tortenelmatarsulat.hu> (12.04.2021).



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