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**Continuity and discontinuity in the social fabric of a school town**

**With special regard to the make-up of the teaching profession**

Thesis booklet for doctorate (PhD) dissertation

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The dissertation’s topic and objectives, plus reasons for choosing it

Our town, Székesfehérvár, the nation’s former location for royal coronations, is one of Hungary’s cities rich in history. Its historical importance is a result of its close relationship with the ruling powers. However, the town is worth exploring for more than its prestige from coronations and its status as a free royal city – it is worthy of research for its role within the history of education. The complexity of the school system, the diversity of organizational changes, the relationship between the city and the schools, the interactions between them and the central role of the teachers in shaping socio-cultural life are all well traceable and illustrated by the relative richness of the material to hand.

In my dissertation I undertake to examine the cultural relations and pedagogical culture of Székesfehérvár as a school town from several angles, and to explore the institutional system of cultural transfer and the personal and institutional relationships behind it. I focus on the individual relationship systems, above all on the functioning of secondary school teachers and their role in shaping the socio-cultural life of the city.

1. In the first half of the thesis, I look for an answer to whether the city that was once important in the political life of this country really transformed into a school town. As part of this process, I will examine the development and completion of the secondary school network and urban education policy. I will not undertake a full analysis of education policy, but will use the available resources to highlight the extent to which the city acted under the weight of its obligations under the laws and regulations; the extent to which local citizens’ needs and requests were taken into account in decision-making; and the conduct towards institutions which the city had no direct obligation to maintain.

2. In my investigation, I follow the clues to answer various questions. How did the processes of professionalism take place in secondary schools? How did teaching departments stack up in terms of teaching qualifications? Were there teachers among the members of the national pedagogical associations and did teachers participate in the creation of regional advocacy? Were they also members of the associations organising the country’s academic life? Did they undertake doctorate research and courses? Did they publish articles in pedagogical journals and work as textbook writers? And in parallel with all these processes, in what form did the involvement of teachers in local public life manifest
itself? How did they contribute to the passing on of the traditions of knowledge, forms of cultural transfer and the trend for modernisation in cultural transfer effects?

3. From the school environment it was not only teachers who got involved in the cultural life of the city as individuals and as a body, but students as well. During my research, I located the former school spaces. At the heart of these chapters is the question of how the students of secondary schools used the various city spaces, thus giving them a pedagogical function. While using these public spaces, were students able to meet the written and unwritten standards of urban citizenship?

4. I also pose the question of whether the citizens of the city also played a decisive role in the lives of schools. Which functions and institutions of secondary schools interacted with the city in terms of the use of space? In the life of schools, how did the patronage of modern citizenship manifest itself? To what extent did donations and one-off grants alleviate the financial burden on students? What types of donations helped the work of self-education and youth associations, and did they contribute to students' self-development and studies?

5. In addition to the above questions, an examination of the pedagogical content of the local press was carried out. Did the local newspapers have their own education sections? Which topics dominated the discourse on the subject? Which issues associated with schools were the city's residents concerned about?

In all of these contexts, the thesis will point out Szekesfehérvár's position in the network of school towns that dates back to the 19th century. Szekesfehérvár's position in the national administration of schools and its supportive attitude towards its schools strengthened its central role in public education, contributed to shaping its school-town image and provided a solid basis for the establishment of new types of schools and the differentiation of established school institutions as part of the development of the school structure. The school with the longest history is the city centre grammar school, which has been Jesuit, Paulian and then Cistercian during various periods in time. The 19th century saw the organisation of the institutions for industrial, commercial and academic education, as well as women's education. Private schools and courses specialising in the teaching of music, dance, musical instruments
and foreign languages were also present, and the institutional system of cultural infrastructure behind the school network was developed.

**Sources and methods of research**

In my dissertation traditional, deductive and analytical research methods of historical science and educational history came to the fore due to the nature of the subject. The review of secondary resources and the study of the literature concerning the society, local history, educational policy and the development of the local school network during the period under consideration was even more nuanced by the questions. After that, the collection and critical analysis of primary resources constituted the longest process. Descriptive and interpretative approaches helped in the analysis of the primary sources. (Szabolcs, 2001. 113-114.) In the course of the research and analysis of resources, I placed particular focus on their content and credibility. Secondary sources both from the time and later helped me to interpret and analyse them. After that came the synthesis and the historical background. (Kéri, 2001. 74-85.)

In addition to the ordering principle of chronology, I have tried to involve the synchronic approach in the investigation. With this in mind, following the presentation of economic, social and church policy factors determining the make-up of the city's school network and the development of local public education, I've brought certain problematic points to the forefront of my research which highlight the city's education policy and emphasise the position of Székesfehérvár in the network of educational and cultural centres of the era.

In the other chapters of the thesis, quantitative research methods came to the fore. When exploring the relationship of teachers with regional, cultural and social life, the starting point for the analysis was their repositories of information. Prior to my archival research work, I decided on the criteria for which persons should be included in the database. According to this, teachers were investigated who taught in schools during the period between the establishment of the particular school (in the case of the grammar school, its change to main grammar school status in 1851) and 1924. The database included regular teachers; assistants; specialist occasional teachers; school doctors teaching health; teachers of Roman and Greek Catholic, Protestant and Israelite studies; as well as teachers in training to replace specialist teachers. Using an analysis of the structures obtained from notices and information about their careers, I have explored the same data sets for each person based on pre-defined criteria. I have investigated their participation in national academic and professional cultural institutions and associations; their involvement in regional and local associations; their roles in the
shaping of the social and cultural life of Szekesfehérvár and in public administration; their appearances in the press; their activities regarding publications and literature; and their activities of patronage to help students. Although the repositories of information on teachers formed the cornerstone of my work, it should be stressed that this method cannot be adapted to meet the criteria of prosopography, since I collected data relating to the criteria I had defined rather than for the sake of completeness.

At the heart of the study was the teaching institutes above primary school level and their teaching staff. In the dissertation, I tried to achieve consistency by following the concept of István Mészáros. The distinguished educational historian designated as intermediate ("középszintű") those primary schools, grammar schools and schools within the realschule system that prepared students for tertiary education. He called secondary schools that also took students further than the basic level but did not give them the chance to study further at the highest level mid-level ("középfokú"). (Mészáros, 1995. 6-8.)

The research covers the period of the second half of the 19th century and the first two decades of the 20th. The initial years are marked by the city's defining educational history events, namely the beginning of the completion of the local secondary school network, including the evolution of the grammar school with its centuries of tradition into the town's main grammar school in 1851. The endpoint for the dissertation falls at a natural point, the year when there were significant changes in the teaching profession and schools: 1924. The centralising of teacher training as a result of the 1924: XXVII law meant that the development of the teaching profession came under direct supervision (Németh, 2012. 93.), making it a significant milestone when we want to study the process of teacher professionalisation. In local history, the most significant changes in the life of schools also took place up to that decade, following the arc of the initial development of institutions. To understand certain events, references that fall outside this timeframe are inevitable, and they are only included in the dissertation to identify and explain context.

Valuable primary resources for research, such as notices and written materials about the schools, are kept by the Archives of the City of Szekesfehérvár, the Fejér County Archives of the Hungarian National Archives, the Bishops' and Szekeskáptalan Archives of Szekesfehérvár, and the National Pedagogical Library and Museum. The series of publications by Klára Grábérné Bősze and Károly Léces: The sources of Hungarian educational history. Bibliography of Hungarian notices 1850/51-1948/49 and the bibliographies of notices present in the local archives acted as my guide. The press of the era was also used as a resource. The newspapers provided important additional information about
the city's school institutions. Included in their columns were the teachers' treatises, school celebrations and observations. They helped me to trace the issues that preoccupied the city's residents, and they also brought forth a number of personal realisations. Among the press outlets of the time, I reviewed the columns and the sections of Szekesfejérvár, Szekesfehérvár and The Countryside (Székesfehérvár és Vidéke), as well as the Szekesfehérvár Newspaper (Székesfehérvári Hírlap).

Structure of the dissertation

The subject matter of research, its objectives, resources and methods, as well as the historiographical review of the literature, are followed by a chapter exploring the economic, social and church policy factors that determined the development of local public education. At the beginning of the dissertation, following the traditional method of institutional history research, I also felt the need to draw up a systematic summary of relevant local history and school history. These short texts, drawn up to aid synthesis, have proved essential for the study in terms of exploring each context and analysing the city's educational policy.

The questions raised in the investigation will be answered in six main chapters. In the fourth part of the dissertation the classification of realschule institutions, the establishment of the girls' secondary school, the situation of industrial school students and the institutionalisation of their education, as well as the institutions of the grammar school, the commercial school and the Szatmári Roman Catholic nuns all show the city's attitude towards schools.

The fifth main part reviews the effects of the creation and development of the teaching profession in the secondary schools in Szekesfehérvár, in particular with regard to the development of vocational education, the professionalism and advocacy of teachers, their ambitions to obtain a doctorate in humanities, their literary work and their appearances in the press. The following chapters discuss the importance of regional engagement, the forms of contact between teachers, students and the city's residents, and the nature of their contact. The presentation of the pedagogical aspects of the press in Szekesfehérvár will show further the local aspects of the discourse on the subject. The analysis part of the paper ends with a conclusion. The closing chapters include the outlook chapter, the literature referenced, the expression of thanks, and the appendix.
Main results and conclusion

The paper presents the educational history of Szekesfehérvár in the second half of the 19th century and the start of the 20th by analysing the institutional framework of education and the quantitative and qualitative changes in secondary and secondary schools using contemporary primary resources and school documents. In the study of this one city, the historical path of public education development is presented in such a way that the impact of nationwide state and ecclesiastical trends can be seen as they interacted with region-specific values.

Szekesfehérvár is accepted as being a major school town during the era of dualism (1867-1918), with its own centuries-old traditions. During the era of dualism, the city's school network was established and, in addition to the centuries-old Cistercian grammar school in the city centre, new centres of secondary education appeared in the city. The city evolved into a cultural and educational hub for the area that fully met the schooling needs of its catchment area.

The town's education policy, which defined the basics of the construction and funding of the school network and the quality of the relationship and cooperation between city leaders and schools, played a decisive role in the development of the city's school-town image. The question is whether Székesfehérvár planned for the long term and knowingly managed the construction of the school network, or whether it simply fulfilled its obligations under national laws and regulations. In the first half of the 19th century, the city did not have to provide secondary schools, and the grammar school operated to maintain the monastic order. For the first time in the civil era, the city took on this task. The schools were provided with maintenance grants, state aid and tuition fees. The highest burden was the maintenance system, paid for from the city budget, which included paying teachers, as well as maintaining and improving school buildings.

In terms of school formation, the city's supportive attitude and attempts to fulfil the needs of society and the population were heavily influenced by financial challenges. Most of the institutions were established using statutory orders. The financial conditions for starting a school or building schools could not be guaranteed in the long term by the city, and for almost all types of schools the state was asked to play a part. The Ministry of Religious and Public Education played at least the same role as the town itself in the process of Székesfehérvár becoming a school town. Because of the financial burden, schools were only able to operate with state aid, and the realschule-system schools eventually became state-owned. The city
sought to minimise the financial burden of maintenance while enjoying the socio-economic benefits of construction and the boom in cultural life. With this in mind, we can talk only to a very limited extent about a conscious long-term school policy.

Despite the funding difficulties, the huge amount of construction and dynamic development of the school network served as a long-term, effective driver of urban development. The extent of the development is demonstrated by the expansion of the building stock for school education and the impact of teachers and students on shaping the cultural image of the city. The smart new buildings provided the city with a new air of respectability and prestige, and the construction sites had a significant impact on urban development.

In addition to these investments in urban construction, the town's urban development was defined and the urban quality of the city was strengthened by the multifaceted activities of the teachers of the institutions. The secondary school teachers who taught here played a major role in the cultural and social life of the city. They were an influential intellectual group in their immediate surroundings and helped shape public opinion, seeing as they naturally attended and took part in events, gave speeches and recitations, and held lectures.

In parallel with their activities in the cultural and social life of the city, the secondary school teachers in Szekesfehérvár were actively involved in the process of the development of the modern educated society and the Hungarian teaching profession. Creating a situation in which every teacher was qualified was very slow, and the use of unqualified people and unprofessional substitutes was widespread for a long time. The organisation of teacher training resulted in a gradual increase in the number of ordinary teachers and there was a continuous expansion of specialised teaching.

One of the pillars of the professionalism of teachers was advocacy and unified action regarding the outside world. There were teachers from Szekesfehérvár among the members of the national pedagogical associations and they actively participated in the organisation and management of regional advocacy. They were active members of the associations organising the academic life of the country, which also provided an excellent opportunity to expand and update their material and professional knowledge. The determination to be involved in academic work led many even further, prompting them to obtain doctorates in philosophy, a key sign of professionalism at a high level.

Articles by local teachers were published regularly in pedagogical journals, which served as an official forum for professional life and communication between the participants and were an integral part of the professionalization process. Being published in these journals, which were increasingly valued as a communication channel within the growing academic
scene and seen as the official voices of professional associations representing a particular field of academia, proved that the various experts from each discipline saw the teachers as external experts. This created a connection between public education and the general public, with teachers playing an increasingly appreciated role in shaping public opinion. Their work as textbook writers with proofreading by the Cistercian grammar school teachers contributed to the emergence of increasingly high-quality textbooks.

The new class of secondary school teachers became embedded in local society and in the cultural life of the city. Their academic and other promotional lectures, as well as their active membership in associations, had an impact on community formation and the maintenance of community identity. The development of associations was one of the defining factors of the era of civic development, so the ambitious attitude of teachers beyond teaching work had a strong impact on young people too. In addition to the transfer of knowledge beyond the curriculum, the formation of self-study circles, student groups and financial-aid associations were key defining aspects in the "social" education of the youth. The school teachers, thanks to their embracing of the youth associations and the intellectual work that they were motivated to carry out in addition to their teaching, fostered generations of talented young people who later became the leaders of the city's academic, economic and political life.

The school students did not appear in public only after their studies had finished in the city – their presence was an integral part of the city's daily life. They were present in every aspect of social life in the town. The school institutions made sure that their students fulfilled their religious duties, making visiting churches an integral part of the lives of students. Other areas of the schools-town relationship included accommodating students in private houses, actively participating in city celebrations, going on sport and study trips, and viewing local and visiting displays and exhibitions. However, during students' free time and in non-school-organized programmes there were often cases of student pranks and other relaxed behaviour. The disruptive behaviour of some pupils was a constant theme for citizens that presented their teachers with a serious problem, given that they had little means to influence pupils.

Students shaped the city's daily life, but the city's residents also appeared in the lives of the schools. The large banquet halls in the schools played a large part in the town's cultural life, being used for religious celebrations, patriotic commemorations, scientific and educational readings, as well as musical, theatrical and youth performances. Public celebrations such as gymnastics competitions, realschule and industrial school art exhibitions, as well as jubilee celebrations, all brought attention to the life and work of each school. The citizens and leaders of the city were invited to both school celebrations and school exams. In
addition, the phenomenon of social patronage created and strengthened the direct link between the citizens and the schools. Modern citizenship and the patronage of merchants and financial institutions provided a solid basis for the educational advancement of countless students, and the pace of improvements to school classrooms, gyms and libraries depended largely on donations from benefactors.

The importance of the question of education is indicated by the fact that three newspapers in Szekesfehérvár had their own education section. My comprehensive thematic review of issues published in the local press highlights which topics dominated the discourse on education, and the issues, problems, suggestions and debates that provoked the most intense interest. They also directly represent the pedagogical thinking of the era, since many of them were written by local teachers.

Thanks to the establishment of solid intellectual foundations, many schools or their direct successors still operate to this day. In the second half of the 19th century, Szekesfehérvár evolved into a major educational and cultural hub in the region. The self-image of the city was built primarily around the flourishing of cultural values, and as a result thought of itself as a school town. The city's educators were key players in the process that led to this – they felt obliged to act at the local level as a defining group of the cultural elite and took responsibility for the development of regional advocacy, associations and social life in the interest of advancing the society’s level of culture. Their work and the support of the town's citizens provided a solid foundation that makes the centuries-old traditions of education in Szekesfehérvár worth exploring today.
Selection of literature used for this PhD dissertation


Sources from archives

Presentations and scientific publications of the topic

Conference papers


Written publications


