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THE SUPPORT FOR BECOMING A TEACHER IN ALTERNATIVE SCHOOLS

DOCTORAL (PHD) DISSERTATION
THESES

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1 Introduction

As long as there has been mainstream school, there has been school criticism as well. These criticisms are often intended to improve schools and to create and operate schools that in some ways could result in better functioning more efficient schools. Alternative schools operating in Hungary today were created with the same purpose and even though they go back to school reform ideas and reform pedagogies of the early twentieth century, today they try to define themselves not by their deviation from the mainstream school, but by emphasizing their peculiarities. In a certain interpretation, alternative schools can even be prototypes of a school of the future, so we can rightly expect from their examination that we can gain relevant knowledge for the teacher's work to make the schools of the future more effective.

Teacher training is adapted to the operation and expectations of the mainstream school, and although the questions raised by school reformers may appear from time to time in the discourses on teacher training, the training and the schools would have to change at the same time in order for a significant change to occur in the system as a whole. The key to change lies within the 'teachers' views. The formation of pedagogical views goes back to childhood and school years; if these do not correspond to the currently expected pedagogical approach, it is necessary to shape them during the training period. Since in alternative schools the difficulty may be that students gained experiences in mainstream education, and then teachers trained to teach in mainstream schools have to adapt their thinking to a specific approach, these schools offer a good research ground for further investigation of the evolution of these views.

In the pedagogic view of alternative schools, the teacher is not the only custodian of knowledge, but rather the creator of an effective learning environment and the child's companion in learning. Just as alternative schools can carry the image of a school of the future, in the same way, we can recognize forward-looking characteristics in the image of alternative teachers of reform pedagogies and school renewal thinkers. We can even see this in the present, since with the rise of digital techniques and the fact that information is available for those who intend to learn, regardless of schools, the role of teachers in the process of teaching as a facilitator and environment creator comes to the fore. Professional training and development will be truly effective if they fit coherently into a supportive environment. Therefore, the fact that not only their pedagogy, but also their social and organizational functioning can be clearly distinguished from mainstream schools, speaks in

favour of examining alternative schools, so that the developments taking place in these schools fit their specific environment.

2 Theoretical background

Due to the definition of the studied population, we had to clarify the concept of the alternative school, which is approached differently by educational historians, theoreticians and practising alternative school specialists. Several of the sources draw attention to the problem arising from various interpretations. The interpretation of the alternative 'school's concept is strongly related to the quality of mainstream education in the given space and time, for example, in what way does it offer choices as an alternative. Several sources state that solely the use of alternative methods will not make a school alternative, and in real alternatives, not only the pedagogical but also the entire school operation significantly differ from what is usual in mainstream schools. Some sources classify the reform pedagogic schools of the early twentieth century as alternative schools, other sources understand alternative schools only as schools that have developed a unique vision in order to achieve their specific goals. These are called modern alternative schools, innovative schools, or self-developed programs.

A prominent feature of alternative schools is thinking in the specific role of a teacher. The interpretation of the concept of the role can be approached in many ways and can also apply to functions, the teacher's personality, knowledge, relationships, and connections. In relation to professional knowledge, we have explained the importance of views, which as a filter and evaluation system strongly influence the reception of information, thereby having a strong impact on both training and subsequent development, as well as practical pedagogical knowledge.

We connected the discussion of becoming a teacher with thinking about the teacher's role, thereby indicating that the individual's image of being a teacher and the role of a teacher is formed in different phases of becoming a teacher. The different life path models describe the professional path by emphasizing the different characteristics of it. In connection with supporting the development of teachers, we interpreted the learning of teachers as a continuous, cyclical process, during which an important element is reflection during the process. Within continuous professional development, both research and educational management put an emphasis on supporting beginning teachers.

Compared to the sources of topics mentioned so far, the research literature on alternative schools is considerably more modest. The reason for this is, on the one hand, that the study population is small, and, on the other hand, that little scientific research has been carried out in Hungarian alternative schools so far. One of the goals of this thesis is to increase the resources on alternative school research.

3 Methodology and framework of the research

The main goal of our research was to discover how someone becomes a teacher in the alternative schools selected for the research, and how these institutions help their teachers' professional development. Only ten schools met the criteria of our sample, and we examined all of them. The aim of the study with a small number of samples was to reveal common characteristics and trends. During the research, we looked for similarities between the schools. The purpose of comparing them with each other was only to perceive that there may be differences in their operations.

Our research wanted to examine the reality of alternative schools in itself, primarily not in comparison with the functioning of mainstream schools. Our assumption is that if a school is created from the bottom up by some real need (e.g. a collective need, a specific life situation or a sense of responsibility towards a specific target group), and the school's development is primarily determined by its own experiences and feedback directly from school users, then characteristic forms of operations are going to develop that are independent of the school's other qualities.

The effectiveness of schools with a specific image that differ from the mainstream, cannot always be measured with the same tools as those of the mainstream school. On the part of the alternative schools, the opinion was that what and how the scientific researchers investigated, the schools rarely found useful from their own 'development's point of view. In the present research, the researcher tried to keep both aspects in mind.

The strategy of the research is an exploratory, interpretive, descriptive study, for which we used qualitative methods. The process was strongly characterized by iterativeness, as the researcher was in permanent contact with the field at the same time as the research, beyond the subject of the research, so the process was also shaped by these influences. During the investigations, we used several methods in order to reveal deeper connections than the description and to obtain complementary information.

In the research, we primarily aimed for objectivity, but the researcher's emic perspective was strongly determinative. The strength of this research, which comes from the insider nature, is due to the fact that during the working relationship between the researcher and the interviewees (meaning the employees playing an important role in these alternative schools) which goes back several years, an honest, trusting relationship developed that an external researcher cannot develop. When selecting the schools, our goal was to include all schools in the investigation that have been operating as legitimate schools in Hungary for the longest time as autonomously as possible. Therefore, we defined characteristics that allowed us to examine all members of the given population. In our research, based on Bodonyi (2012) following the terminology used in our 2017 study (Dobos, 2017) we used the term "modern alternative school" to distinguish alternative schools with a specific school concept from schools that directly follow reform pedagogies and among the modern alternative schools we considered those to be investigated, which are defined as alternative schools by several specialist literature dealing with this. We excluded from the investigation those institutions whose professionalism is strongly influenced by an approach or value defined by some external organization or community, but we did not select based on legal compliance or alternative maintenance. From our study's point of view, the sufficient experience of the schools is an important element, therefore we examined schools that have been operating for at least 20 years, ensuring the continuity of the basic principles of the concept developed at the time of foundation.

In the research, we examined the pedagogical regulations of the schools using content analysis, we questioned the staff of the schools responsible for teacher recruitment and professional support using a semi-structured interview, and then we obtained information from the teachers using a questionnaire. In the questionnaire, the teachers also displayed their subjective opinion using a visual method, provided information about their own life path, and evaluated forms of support using Q-sorting.

So far, Q-methodology research has rarely been used in Hungarian educational research. Its main purpose is to form types based on subjective points of view, and although it is classified as a qualitative research method, the data obtained with Q-sorting is also suitable for statistical analysis. During Q-sorting, the respondent arranges the statements - in our research 54 forms of support - in a predetermined pyramid-shaped matrix. During Q-sorting, unlike other attitude scales, the variables can interact with each other, and this in some cases presents the respondent with a forced choice. In our research, we wanted to emphasize this

feature of the method. Our sample consisted of ten schools, 18 interviewees and 114 people who filled out the questionnaires.

4. Research questions

At the beginning of the research, we started with questions, which were organized around three themes:

A) To understand the context of becoming a teacher, we asked the following research questions:

- What types of characteristics do the examined schools use to define their own alternativeness?
- What characteristics do the examined schools use to describe their preferred teacher role?
- How do the teachers of the examined schools think about the teaching career?
- What similar life path elements are there in the professional life path of the teachers of the examined schools?

B) One of the main content areas of the research is the recruitment of teachers. We examined the hiring of teachers along the following research questions:

- During what process and according to what aspects do the investigated alternative schools hire teachers?
- Are there elements typical of all alternative schools in these procedures and practices?

C) Another main content area of the research is supporting the development of teachers. To explore this, we asked the following research questions:

- What are the areas and professional knowledge that the examined schools think can be learned or developed?
- How do they support the professional development of teachers in the examined schools?
- What forms of support do the teachers working in the examined schools prefer in terms of their own professional development?
- What factors and characteristics can influence the extent to which teachers think a specific form of support is effective in terms of their own professional development?

5 Results

In the examined documents, it can be seen that **the institutions included in the research see themselves as alternative schools**, and certain values and modes of operation appear among their characteristics. Each of them emphasizes different autonomies and the pursuit of consensus at certain decision-making levels. Based on the self-definitions found in the documents, we can conclude that **the alternative school is an independent institution based on pedagogical principles, in which professional independence and autonomy are emphasized, and where sovereign individuals and groups decide autonomously on issues affecting them.**

The examined schools were grouped according to the emphasis on pedagogical views, attitudes, methods, and other characteristics. We classified nine schools into three groups according to whether methods and learning organization methods, the teacher's role or other characteristics are discussed more in their programs. The program of the tenth differs significantly from the others in that most of the writing is about the image of children, and the content of learning is discussed much more briefly. **Even with this strong difference, the role of the teacher is among the three most discussed contents in the case of all ten schools, and in relation to this, the schools emphasize their alternative characteristics.** Nevertheless, it is evident in several documents that they often do not distinguish between the roles, opportunities, rights and duties of teacher-student, adult-child. In the programs, they often speak in general about a person or a person who is unique, sovereign, and unrepeatable, and therefore they must be given attention, the opportunity for growth and development. The majority of the examined schools use the term organization in an extended sense, for the entire school community. This idea fits well with Rogers' person-centeredness, which places relationships at the centre of operations. In the further description of the functioning of the schools, many Rogersian person-centred elements appear. For example, such is the emphasis on abilities related to self-knowledge, both in the development of students and in the functioning of the organization, and the appearance of emotions related to several contents. **Although the characteristics of Rogers' person-centeredness can be found in the description of the functioning of the examined schools, the majority of them mean child-centeredness, increased attention to children and placing their needs at the centre when they mention the term person-centred.**

When writing about the cooperation of teachers, a kind of democratic practice emerges in each program, in which innovative thinking plays a significant role, and in connection with this, the form of workshop work and teamwork is also mentioned in several places. **The examined schools emphasize their own uniqueness, and uniqueness as a characteristic of people, is also important to them.**

In the images of the teachers of the examined schools, based on their pedagogical programs, we recognize a teacher with a helping and facilitating role, who coordinates, moderates and creates the right environment for learning and development. This specific image of the teacher is an important part of the schools' self-definition, and the characteristics of the teacher's personality, abilities and attitude are emphasized in it. In some programs, a high level of professional and subject knowledge is required, while other documents mention little or nothing about this. When discussing the teacher's role, the person-centred indicator is also emphasized in pedagogical programs, and often the workshop-like collaboration of teachers is mentioned in connection with this.

In the examined programs, certain additional tasks are formulated for teachers compared to traditional teacher tasks. **The primary task of teachers is to create a certain atmosphere and motivate, as well as to provide models and develop an emotional relationship with students.** In the role of providing a model, we can recognize the influence of Steiner's image of the teacher.

The examined schools express the expectation that the teachers participate with their entire personality in the school processes. The fact that they talk about processes also indicates that they think in a more extended role as a teacher compared to the traditional interpretation. The *autonomous* and *innovative* adjectives appearing in the self-definition of the institutions are also emphasized in connection with the teacher's role. Part of autonomy is the provision of choices, which also appear in relation to work, study and relationships. The documents show that the schools are aware that this job also requires specific skills, and that skills related to the detection and management of emotions are also mentioned as part of this. **The examined schools emphasize the personality development of teachers.**

In the programs, they also write about commitment in relation to the role of teacher, about which we asked the teachers for feedback in the form of a questionnaire. Their answers proved that the teachers of the examined schools are indeed strongly committed to alternative pedagogies.

It can also be seen in the pedagogical programs that the teachers' initiatives have a special role in terms of the functioning of the institutions.

The examined schools consider it important to coordinate the individuality and individual development of the teachers with the community, so cooperation is fundamental for them. These institutions are decentralized organizations where, in addition to joint decisions, they also emphasize the joint responsibility that comes with them, and their operation is based on continuous contact and intensive communication between the participants.

The well-being of teachers also appears as an essential element in the majority of the examined documents. **All the examined schools consider the diversity of teachers as a value and strive to allow teachers to develop through their work.**

From the stories told in the interviews with the leaders, many characteristic elements of the teacher's life path emerged. In connection with the recruitment of teachers, it was mentioned several times that there are colleagues who spent their teaching practice related to their training at the school in question, and as a result stayed there to teach. Several leaders also reported that several teachers came to the school through acquaintances, even by invitation. Noteworthy are those cases that were about teachers who moved from a geographically big distance, specifically because of the particular school.

According to the interviewees, fluctuation is low in all schools and is mostly caused by personal reasons. It is thought-provoking that those who left schools for reasons other than personal ones was often because they themselves realized that the given institution was not for them. We also mentioned that males and those majoring in English and mathematics change paths more often, although this is probably not typical of alternative schools only. Two different opinions emerged regarding the relationship between the workplace and private life: according to one, the alternative school as a workplace should be closely connected to the private life of the teacher, according to the other, there should be a special effort to separate the workplace and private life from each other.

Based on the stories learned during the interviews, we identified milestones and stations in the educator's life journey, and we also asked the teachers about these using the questionnaire. From the answers received, it is likely that the stories told in the interviews are important to the leaders, but they are rather one-off, unique cases. Among those who filled out the questionnaire, the ratio of colleagues who worked in mainstream schools and who did not work in mainstream schools at all is almost 2:1. In addition, it was revealed that more than a tenth of those who completed the questionnaire had already worked at the given school without a teaching qualification. Some of them have since acquired the necessary qualifications. Of all our background variables, the most characteristic of the questionnaire respondents is that they had already participated in an alternative school program several

times before starting their work in an alternative school. That is why we made a recommendation for schools to try to reach external colleagues with their programs in order to acquire teachers.

The teachers of the examined schools consider the teaching career path to be rather positive. In the drawings of the teacher's life path, the beginning of the career path was depicted as a rising section, the middle of the career path was more of a rising, sometimes stagnant or in some places fluctuating section, and the end of the career arc was represented as a stagnant or slightly rising section. Looking at the beginning of the career paths, the drawings of the respondents characterized by different background variables did not show a significant difference, although it is thought-provoking that only those who started their pedagogical work in mainstream schools drew the beginning of their career as a descending stage. Among many others, this may indicate that alternative schools can support new teachers more effectively compared to mainstream schools. In the representation of the middle and the end of the path, we did not find a connection with any prominent life path characteristic. In a significant proportion of the drawings, the respondents placed the endpoint of the trajectory curves higher than the starting point, most of them much higher.

The majority of the examined participants drew themselves in a stagnant or rising branch on the teacher's career trajectory. In the cases of those whose significantly differ from these, we found that the age of those who present themselves in the descending branch is rather higher, and among them, compared to the entire sample, the proportion of men is significantly higher.

One of the few peculiar drawings, contrary to the above-below, positive-negative interpretation, tried to depict displacements of different dimensions with curves in different directions, and in another, the reflection on the career path appeared with symbols conveying feelings. Two additional drawings clearly highlighted their own situation and condition from the general teacher's career path, depicting themselves much higher in comparison, in an upward position.

In the examined schools, the recruitment of teachers is less regulated in writing, but based on the interviews, the typical elements used by them can be identified in terms of both the process and the aspects.

Most of the examined schools look for a new colleague when a task is unfulfilled. In some schools, a motive appears which is to offer a job to a professional applicant in order to be able to offer them the position in the event of a vacancy later on - the selection system of one of these schools is based specifically on this. In this school, everyone who is interested is

welcome, they are given the opportunity to join the work as volunteers, and the volunteers who are already working for them will later become internal employees.

In some of the examined schools, there is an effort to hire new colleagues according to a permanent system, but this is often overridden by reality. There are more elements like that in the processes than in the admission criteria. Based on the practice of nine schools, we illustrated the characteristic steps of the admission process of the examined schools in a flowchart. **The first step of the permanent elements is to advertise the job; the first impression is especially important, and an interview always takes place before the decision is made.** During the admission process, **schools not only try to get to know the applicant, but also to introduce themselves. In such cases, in addition to their specific features, they also try to present the difficulties associated with them.** An important part of the admissions process is when the candidate is observed interacting with the children: this can be done during a trial lesson or by trying to involve the applicant in a normal school situation and observing their reaction to it. **Primarily, they monitor the candidate's connection to the children and the 'candidate's reaction to them. It is important how the candidate themselves experiences the process of getting to know each other, and they try to take their aspects and needs into account.**

The decision is made by consensus in all examined schools, with the involvement of admissions officers. The decision is rarely preceded by a major debate. In such situations, several schools try to achieve results with some kind of decision-making method. In each interview, it was said that recently there are fewer and fewer applicants, so they cannot take into account all the aspects they expect, often there is some kind of compulsion in the situation that strongly controls their decision.

Most of the admission criteria of the examined schools are associated with subjective perceptions and feelings, the leaders often make intuitive decisions. They are aware of this, and during the interviews they themselves tried to adequately understand and formulate the aspects. Knowledge is less expected from the candidates. On the one hand, because they assume that they already know them as qualified teachers, and on the other hand, because they think that the knowledge can be acquired, and the methods can be learned afterwards. On the other hand, **they emphasize the existence of social and personal characteristics from which they can infer a connection with students and colleagues,** and from which it can be seen that in a later problematic situation, the candidate will be able to see this and deal with it reflectively and change it if necessary. The expected cognitive characteristics are also aimed at the ability to make change and be able to change: in this area, creativity and innovation

were mentioned most often by the participants. The candidate's motivation is very important: joining the school should be more than just an employee's aspiration, their motivation should show some kind of strong commitment, ambition, and attachment to the given alternative. At schools with a specific target group, additional background factors may appear during teacher recruitment that are independent of the candidate's intentions but are important from the management of the target 'group's point of view.

During the admission process, the examined schools often ask directly about their specific aspects, and the answer is evaluated according to how the candidate thinks about them. In all elements of the admission process, the candidate's reflection is monitored the most. The schools are open and inclusive to a wide variety of applicants, but the most important thing for them is how the candidate reflects on themselves and their work, and whether they are able to change and to make change. In this respect, the admission process itself models the schools' other processes, during which the schools actually test how the candidate will react in situations regarding the school. **The examined schools also interpret the admission process itself as a situation showing their specific operation.**

With regard to helping teachers' development, based on what was said in the interviews, we came to the conclusion that the functioning of the examined schools is often so specific that **the samples taken from other schools can rarely be used.** Newly arrived colleagues continuously learn the school's specific methods and operations during their work, and in the process develop the skills they need to be able to perform the school's specific tasks. With the Q-method examination, we also showed that working with experienced colleagues is much more helpful for teachers who have worked at the school for less than three years than for those who have worked there for a long time.

In the examined schools, the methods, the communication of feelings, the faculty patterns, sentences, and gestures are thought to be learnable and masterable. In addition, the interviewees think that the attitude towards people and the world could be improvable, and they think that there is an inner quality, some kind of character, which they could not adequately describe, but they think that the value system itself can be further developed based on this. There was an interview in which it was stated that the school also develops because, following the questions of the new entrants, older colleagues also become aware of the school's characteristics again and again. **It seems that in the examined schools, they have a clear idea about some kind of character that is necessary for alternative school work and that enables the teacher to develop further in the alternative school.**

In what was said during the interviews, it can be observed that in the examined schools, the teachers' development is being helped and supported widely, taking into account several aspects. Based on these, we identified 54 different forms of support, on which we asked teachers for feedback using the Q-sorting. The teachers who participated in the research **consider the feedback received from the students to be the most helpful**. In this opinion, the element of the examined pedagogical programs, in which the students are viewed as partners, appears. Since formal feedback is considered less helpful, we assume that **feedback from students primarily means feedback received directly during everyday life**. In addition, the need and ability to be able to reflect on oneself, is important for them. Two other forms of support that are most helpful are positive reinforcement and the formulation of your own goals. The evaluation of the other forms of support also shows that **internal support is more helpful than external support**. Leaders do not have a prominent role in the support process, the respondents generally consider support from experienced colleagues and colleagues who work with the same children to be more helpful. In several schools, the need for reinforcement and feedback of weakness appeared in an inverse relationship, but the teachers participating in the study overall preferred positive reinforcement. **Being told what to do or who to work with is considered the least supportive**. This is consistent with the autonomy shown in their self-definition.

Mentoring works in all the examined schools, but in a much broader interpretation than as prescribed by law. In each of the examined schools, anyone who needs it can get a mentor, and a mentor can be anyone who can provide support in that particular topic. Moreover, mentoring can be provided jointly by a small group or team. The mentee has a strong say in who will be the mentor: in several schools, they can specifically decide on it, or they and the mentor choose each other mutually. The schools assign different time frames to the various mentoring processes, which are flexible enough so that the mentee and the mentor can decide how much and how regularly they will spend time on it. Along with that, several schools also have pre-planned and allocated time mentoring, which usually means at least weekly meetings. The most common method of mentoring processes is hosting, both on the part of the mentor and the mentee, as well as many conversations, possibly planning and holding lessons together. Based on the reports, it seems that it is **common for the mentor and mentee not only to interact during the formal mentoring process, but also to pay close attention to each other on a daily basis**.

Overall, further education was not classified as one of the more preferred forms of support. Some schools have a special internal training system: in one, colleagues are

prepared for a particular teacher role in the school, while in the other, their specific methodology is taught during the training. In several schools various joint trainings are organized for a few faculty days each year, sometimes with external trainers. These courses often take the form of trainings, and in addition to the transfer of information and skill development, the goal is also to build the faculty's team. Among the trainings, the teachers said the team-building training helped their professional development the most, although overall the various trainings were not classified as the most preferred forms of support.

Hospitality is considered to be a particularly important form of assistance in the examined schools. All the interviewees reported in detail that different forms of this are implemented in schools. Its purpose can be many, from getting to know each other, to teacher development and getting to know students better, to learning different methods. In detailing the results of the Q-sorting, we drew attention to the fact that in some schools, the support provided by those receiving hospitality is considered to be more helpful, and in some schools, the support provided by those receiving hospitality is considered to be more helpful, and from this we conclude that the different needs are not always in harmony.

Regarding some characteristics, there is a strong difference between the beginning teachers and the teachers who have been working in the given school for a long time. One of these is the support from experienced colleagues, which colleagues who joined in the last three years understandably consider much more helpful. The idea of joint cooperation in innovation has yielded instructive results: based on the data, it appears that the teachers who joined the school in the first few years after its foundation feel much more supportive of this kind of cooperation than those who joined the school in the last three years. **The question is whether the reason for this is that the new arrivals do not have time to innovate in addition to integration, or that the attitudes of the generation that founded the school at the time of the regime change and today's employees are so different from each other.**

We have examined what forms of support teachers who place themselves in different stages of their career path - ascending, descending or stagnant - find more useful, but we did not find such correlations. Furthermore, we tried using factor analysis and reverse factor analysis to create groups from the 54 forms of support, and also based on these forms of support from the 114 teachers who completed the Q-sorting, but we did not reach any meaningful results either.

In the interviews, we also tried to find out what obstacles there might be to integration or professional development in the examined schools. Based on the stories, we have grouped these issues into a few nodes below:

- lack of real understanding, misinterpretations;
- dissonance of principles and practice;
- role confusions;
- difficulties in communication;
- traditional schemes that are too strong, resulting in inflexibility.

Although all interviewees had many experiences with the problems listed above, it seems that they have an incredibly tough time getting rid of colleagues who clearly do not meet the specific expectations of the school. **They have such a strong empathy towards the problematic teacher that they try to solve the difficulties for quite a long time**, even for years they try different aids in order to change the situation.

Among the examined schools, there were several where more than 45% of our faculty members completed the Q-sorting, and as a result, **one school had characteristics that were significantly different from the others, based on which it seems that the conditions there are more hierarchical**. It seems that in the school that was found to be more unique in terms of the development of teachers, the community plays just as important a role as in the others, but at the same time, it is characterized by more hierarchical relations. They prefer support from within, but compared to other schools, the leaders have a more prominent role in this than the other experienced colleagues of the school. This is the school where colleagues are the least bothered by being assigned who to work with. From all this, it cannot necessarily be assumed that this is a hierarchical organization in the traditional sense. We also know from the specialized literature that the initiator of the given movement or idea plays a significant role in school reforms. It is possible that this school also has a latent leadership role, which means much more recognition of professional experience than a manifestation of external hierarchy.

A few other schools differ more significantly from the others in their opinion about certain forms of support, but we did not find any differences in any of the schools, on the basis of which additional individual school profiles can be drawn. The card package, which includes 54 forms of support prepared for the Q arrangement, can be used to develop professional work and professional self-awareness.

6 Additional results

Most of the few sources of literature on alternative schools were written when the schools were established. **Therefore, in addition to the research results, we consider as a noteworthy result of the dissertation the introduction of the founders of the ten oldest modern alternative schools operating in Hungary and that data on the current state of the schools and additional descriptions showing the context of their pedagogical programs were published during the presentation of the sample.** The summary list presenting the ten schools in this way fills a gap, as it has never been created before.

Another additional result of the research is a tool for reflection and planning aimed at supporting teachers, the usefulness of which received positive feedback on several professional forums.

7 opportunities for support for becoming a teacher and further research directions

Based on our research, several lessons might be drawn for alternative schools. Regarding the hiring of colleagues, we recommend that they try to reach out to teachers who could later become their potential teachers with their programs that are open to various external parties. In connection with the admission process, they should take care to balance their regulated processes with ad hoc elements and their intuitions as much as possible. They seem to have quite a lot of experience in helping teachers develop, and they have a number of solutions for that. It would be worth paying attention to, so that unsuitable persons can be recognized sooner, and dare to state their incompatibility with the characteristics of their school.

In our research, little attention was paid to the connections between the pedagogy of individual schools and the support of teachers, and we did not connect the characteristics of specific schools to this at all, although such research could provide further lessons. It would therefore be worthwhile to inquire the motivations of new entrants and older teachers, because the results of this can serve as a basis for the renewal of schools that have been operating for a long time.

It can be instructive for teacher training to think about what organically developed schools insist on: among these, we consider flexibility, which is based on personality, to be highlighted. Thereby, we recommend further research about the elements of the

familiarization processes operating in alternative schools, even if we have seen that they are quite resource-demanding, in order to examine the suitability of teacher candidates. These experiences, for example, the elements that ensure freedom of decision, choices, and reciprocity, can also provide reference points to support professional development in teacher training and continuing education, as these strongly support both the maintenance of internal motivation and professional orientation.

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